



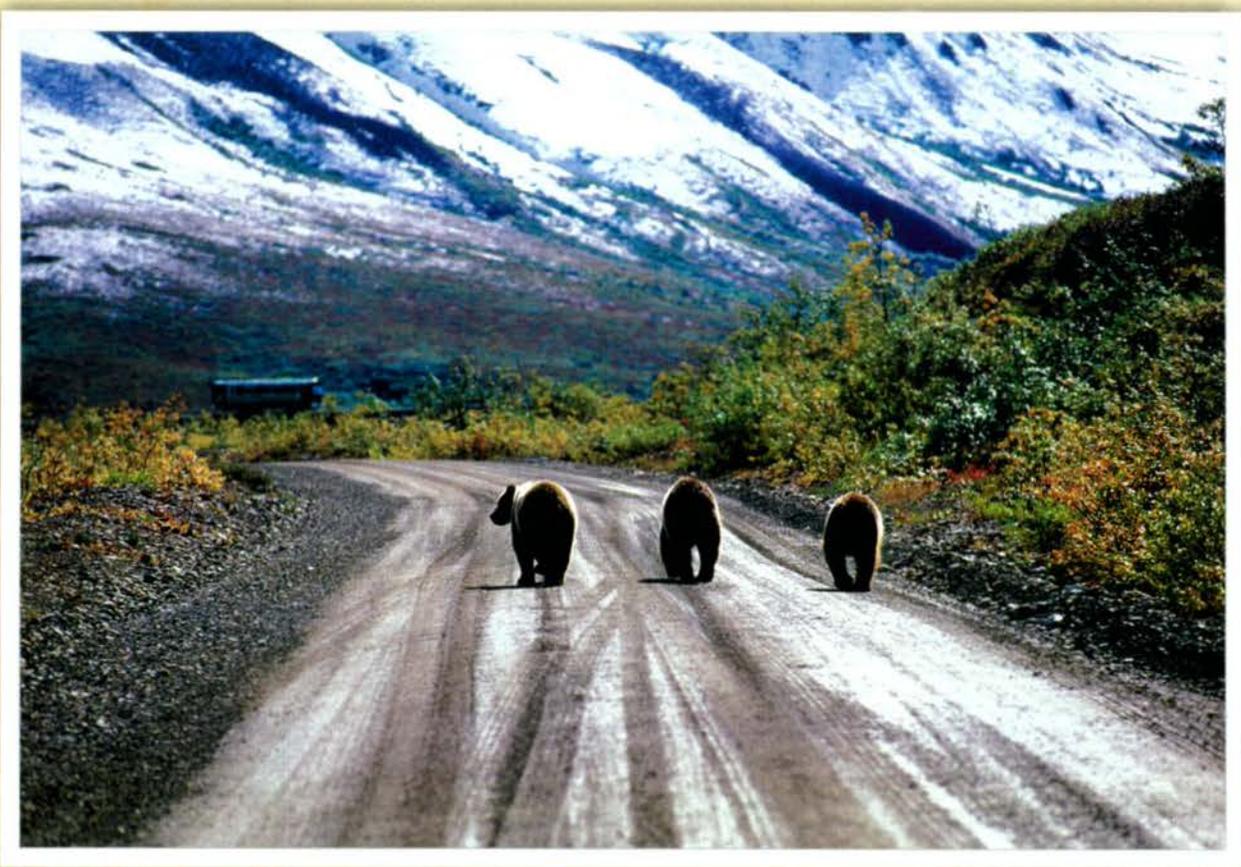
Crown Jewel of the North:

An Administrative History of
Denali National Park and Preserve, Volume 2





Alaska



Alaska

“The National Park Service preserves unimpaired ... natural and cultural resources and values ... for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.”

— NPS mission statement

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An Administrative History of
Denali National Park and Preserve

Volume 2 – General Park History Since 1980, Plus Specialized Themes

Produced by the Alaska Regional Office
National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior
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Preface

By any definition, the area surrounding North America's highest peak is vast. Between 1917 and the late 1970s, Mount McKinley National Park was America's second largest national park (only Yellowstone was bigger), and since 1980, Denali National Park and Preserve—at more than 6,000,000 acres—has been almost twice as large as any “Lower 48” national park unit and it is exceeded in size by only the Gates of the Arctic and Wrangell-St. Elias park units, both located in Alaska. These two Alaska park units, however, are fairly young; both were born during a tumultuous 1970s-era statewide planning effort, and they were not established until President Jimmy Carter, in December 1980, signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. The area that began as Mount McKinley National Park, by contrast, is almost 90 years old. It was Alaska's first national park, and for much of its history, the staff headquartered near the McKinley Park railroad depot represented virtually the only National Park Service presence in America's northernmost territory.

Given the park's enormous size, its long history, and its statewide importance, records related to Mount McKinley National Park and its successor, Denali National Park and Preserve, are far more numerous than those associated with any other Alaska park unit. The historian hoping to write the management history for most Alaska park units has a reasonable expectation of locating and incorporating most of the pertinent records about that unit into a single-volume study. But such is not the case as it relates to the Mount McKinley/Denali park unit. So an obvious question presents itself: should this history attempt to offer the same level of detail as other Alaska park histories, or should completeness be sacrificed for brevity's sake? Over the years, NPS historians have had wildly differing interpretations of their mandate; a recently-published Grand Canyon National Park administrative history, for example, is just 116 pages long, while an administrative history of tiny Pipe Spring National Monument, also in Arizona, runs a daunting 847 pages.

The author of this study has attempted to steer a middle course between these two extremes. It was felt important to discuss the essential details about this park's historical development, but it was also recognized that too much detail would make the study unwieldy and unusable. Given that middle course, the history of the Mt. McKinley/Denali unit is longer than most park

histories, and for that reason it is being printed in two separate volumes. Volume 1, containing eight chapters and completed in 2006, is a general park history for years up until 1980; it is thus a history of Mount McKinley National Park, although four specialized themes related to that history—interpretation, resources management, mountaineering, and minerals management—have been omitted. Volume 2, containing six chapters, provides a general history of Denali National Park and Preserve (for the years 1980 to the present), plus a detailed look at the four themes noted above.

Despite the greater-than-average length of this study, it is readily admitted that hundreds if not thousands of key documents were overlooked during its preparation. Given those omissions, many key events may have certainly, if inadvertently, been discussed either briefly or not at all. The sheer volume of overlooked records—some known, others as-yet-unearthed—is naturally an open invitation for future researchers who, it is fervently hoped, will provide an increasingly comprehensive and sophisticated treatment of the park's history. To assist tomorrow's historians, a brief guide to potential research avenues has been included in a bibliographic note near the end of this volume.

Acknowledgements

Although historical writing may initially appear to be a solitary endeavor, it is in fact a team effort, and I have been fortunate indeed to be able to work with people who are smart, experienced, and generous with their time and talents. A large number of caring, committed individuals—some in the Park Service, some not—have gone to great lengths to ensure that this story would be told accurately and with a high degree of objectivity. High on this list are five individuals whose familiarity with the park's history considerably eased the research process. They include William E. Brown, the author of the park's historic resource study, who has long been an inspiration to me, both personally and professionally; Kristen Griffin, whose acquisition of park archival files gave me an enormous head start; Jane Bryant, who has generously, and on uncounted occasions, shared her forty-plus years of park-related knowledge with me; Steve Carwile, a longtime park employee whose library, and his insight into park affairs, are irreplaceable; and William Nancarrow, who arrived at the park in June 1948 and has enriched the local community ever since. I have heavily relied on the source materials, opinions, anecdotes, and critical observations from all five of these individuals; some of these are reflected in the endnotes, some not. This study is, to a large extent, a function of their collective assistance.

I am indebted to two park employees for the graphics contained in this report. Geographic Information Systems specialist Jon Paynter, as in the previous volume, has produced the various maps for this study. And Jane Bryant, who is the acknowledged expert on the park's historical photographs, graciously took on the enormous job of locating, scanning, placing, captioning, and crediting the large number of photographs. I gratefully appreciate both of their efforts.

Many others have helped along the way. Denali-area resident Tom Walker, for example, has written a number of books and articles about the park's cultural and natural history. Ann Kain, the park's cultural resource manager, has ably assisted me on a number of occasions, and Jane Lakeman has gone out of her way to unearth files from the park archives. Bruce Merrell at Loussac Library, and the Alaska Resource Library and Information Services staff (especially Sharon Prien and Cathy Vitale), have taken a keen interest in the study and guided me to a number of new sources. National Archives and Records Administration staff in Anchorage, San Bruno,

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I wish to single out for praise the cooperation I have received from park superintendents, all the way from George Hall, a remarkable gentleman who served at the helm during the 1960s, to the present chief, Paul Anderson, who has ably managed the park since early 2002. I thank all of these gentlemen for the forthright, honest discussions they provided on a wide range of park issues. I greatly appreciate the assistance of my two supervisors, Sande McDermott (now in the Intermountain Region office in Denver) and Ted Birkedal, who gave me the opportunity to devote the necessary time to complete this study. I'd also like to thank my editorial advisors, all of whom are park employees. Paul Anderson, Joe Van Horn, Ann Kain, Jane Bryant, and Steve Carwile graciously agreed to read over the entire manuscript, while Ingrid Nixon, Tom Meier, Guy Adema, Roger Robinson, and Phil Brease edited individual chapters and considerably improved the final product as a result.

Abbreviations

AAC – American Alpine Club	FY – fiscal year
AAI – Alpine Ascents International, Inc.	GMP – General Management Plan
ADF&G – Alaska Department of Fish and Game	GPO – General Printing Office
ADOT – Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities	GVEA – Golden Valley Electric Association
AIDEA – Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority	HFC – Harpers Ferry Center (NPS)
AIP – Alaskan Independence Party	HJR – House Joint Resolution
ALC – Alaska Limestone Corporation	HLRG – High Latitude Research Group
AKRO – Alaska Regional Office (NPS)	HSR – Historic Structure Report
AMG – Alaska Mountain Guides, Inc.	IBP – Incidental Business Permit
ANCSA – Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act	I&M – inventory and monitoring
ANHA – Alaska Natural History Association	ICOMOS – International Council on Monuments and Sites
ANILCA – Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act	ISTEA – Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act
AOPA – Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association	JKS – James K. Singleton (judge)
APG – Alaska Planning Group	JWS – John W. Sedwick (judge)
AR – Alaska Region (NPS)	LTEM – Long-Term Environmental Monitoring
ARA – Automatic Retailers of America	MOMC – Mount McKinley National Park
ARC – Alaska Road Commission	MORA – Mount Rainier National Park
ARCC – Alaska Region (NPS) Curatorial Collection	MOU – Memorandum of Understanding
ARG – Alaska Rescue Group	MPNAR – Master Plan Narrative
ASA – Alaska State Archives	MSLC – Murie Science and Learning Center
ATCO – Alberta Trailer Company	NARA ANC – National Archives and Records Center, Anchorage
ATIA – Alaska Travel Industry Association	NARA CP – National Archives and Records Center, College Park, Md.
ATV – all-terrain vehicle	NARA SB – National Archives and Records Center, San Bruno, Calif.
BBS – Bureau of Biological Survey	NARA SP – National Archives and Records Center, Sand Point (Seattle), Wash.
BLM – Bureau of Land Management	NEPA – National Environmental Policy Act
BPR – Bureau of Public Roads	NOIS – National Outdoor Leadership School
CAKN – Central Alaska Network (Inventory and Monitoring Program)	NPCA – National Parks (and) Conservation Association
CCF – Central Classified Files	NPS – National Park Service
CD-ROM – compact disk – read-only memory	NTSB – National Transportation Safety Board
CFR – Code of Federal Regulations	N.W.T. – North West Territories
CIRI – Cook Inlet Region, Inc.	ONR – Office of Naval Research
CMC – Clean Mountain Can	ORV – off-road vehicle
CPSU – Cooperative Park Studies Unit	PA – physician’s assistant
CUL – Commercial Use License	P.L. – Public Law
DARC – Denali Administrative Records Collection	PNRO – Pacific Northwest Regional Office (NPS/Seattle)
DCP – Development Concept Plan	PRIP – Park Restoration and Improvements Program
DENA – Denali National Park and Preserve	R ₄ – Region Four (NPS, based in San Francisco)
DMRC – Denali Mountaineering Records Collection	RAC – (Subsistence) Regional Advisory Council
DNR – (Alaska) Department of Natural Resources	RCC – Rescue Coordination Center
DOT(&PF) – Department of Transportation (and Public Facilities)	RCR – Cultural Resources Division (in the NPS’s Alaska Regional Office)
DSC – Denver Service Center	RD – Regional Director
EA – Environmental Assessment	RG – Record Group
EIS – Environmental Impact Statement	RML – Resource Management Library (at DENA)
en – Endnote	RS – Revised Statutes
FHWA – Federal Highways Administration	
FIREPRO – Fire Program Management (NPS)	
FLPMA – Federal Land Policy and Management Act	

RV – recreational vehicle
SAR – Superintendent’s Annual Report
SCA – Service Contract Act
SCA – Student Conservation Association
SDCCC – South Denali Citizens Consultation
Committee
SJR – Senate Joint Resolution
SMR – Superintendent’s Monthly Report
SRC – Subsistence Resource Commission
SST – sweet smelling toilet
TEA-21 – Transportation Equity Act for the 21st
Century
TIC – Technical Information Center (NPS),
Denver
TRAAK – Trails and Recreational Access for
Alaska (citizens’ advisory board)
UA – University of Alaska (Fairbanks)
UAF – University of Alaska Fairbanks
UNESCO – United Nations Educational,
Scientific, and Cultural Organization
USGS – U.S. Geological Survey
VAC – Visitor Access Center
WASO – Washington (DC) Service Office, NPS
WSR – Wilderness Suitability Review

I have done my share of camping around North America and far beyond ... but I cannot recall another camping experience to match the one we enjoyed ... within the boundaries of Mount McKinley National Park. Individually and collectively, the campgrounds have nothing: no electricity or hookups, no bathhouses or playgrounds, no commissaries or coke machines, no morning milk and newspaper deliveries, not even any running water except in the nearest snow- or glacier-fed streams. The individual campsites are so far apart that you may not even be able to see your neighbors ... [and] no campfire sing-alongs are held at night in summertime.

McKinley isn't a typical national park with activities and facilities that are well organized and charted. There is a single winding road that extends from the park entrance and headquarters on the east side for about eighty miles westward to Wonder Lake and a crumbling ghost town, Kantishna, just beyond. But that's all. There are no spurs or scenic loops to drive and only a fraction of the road is paved. Traffic control signs exist only at a few danger points in order not to intrude on the roadside beauty. ... There is no network of well-marked trails, either. A single visitor center ... serves the entire park.

So why camp at McKinley? Because it's simply there. It is Alaskan wilderness as it always was, a place where visitors can hike and climb as they choose, exploring where they wish and at their own pace. ... It is a park that serious outdoorsmen can enjoy.

Charles Nansen, "The Park That Has Nothing,"
Field and Stream, May 1971, pp. 55, 190-91.

Chapter Nine: Managing the Newly-Expanded Park and Preserve, 1981-1994

Getting Started

As noted in Chapter 8, President Jimmy Carter signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act on December 2, 1980, culminating a long, sometimes bitter struggle over the fate of more than one hundred million acres of previously-undesignated federal land in Alaska. One element in that bill—Section 202(3)(a)—added more than 2.5 million acres of national park to Mount McKinley National Park and added another 1.3 million acres of national preserve; as a result, the newly-renamed Denali National Park and Preserve spread out over almost 6.1 million acres of land on both the north and south sides of the Alaska Range. On its surface, Carter's signing of the bill meant that the new park and preserve was actually somewhat smaller than the previous parkland (composed of Mount McKinley National Park and Denali National Monument) had been. But because Carter's monument proclamations had been temporary measures intended to provide interim protection until Congress completed its work, the National Park Service and Congress had provided minimal funding during the previous two years for managing the national monuments. With the lands bill passed, the NPS was finally able to contemplate long-term management of an enlarged park unit.

Park Service officials recognized that, due to the enormous acreage that had just been added, the purpose of the new parkland was in some ways substantially different than before. The 1917 act that established Mount McKinley National Park cryptically stated that the park was “established as a game refuge” and that it also provided “for recreation purposes by the public and for the preservation of animals, birds, and fish and for the preservation of the natural curiosities and scenic beauty thereof.”¹ But when President Carter, in 1978, moved to establish Denali National Monument on lands north, west, and south of the existing park, he felt the need to produce an elaborate rationale to justify his action.² His proclamation therefore gave a detailed description of the need to protect 1) the entire mountain massif, 2) the various glaciers flowing southward from the Alaska Range, 3) the “geologically unique” Cathedral Spires area, 4) the habitat for the McKinley caribou herd, 5) the Toklat River's Warm Springs area, and 6) “the unique subsistence culture of the local residents.”³ Language in the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), by contrast, did not demand the same degree of legal justification

for protecting the new acreage surrounding the existing park. The act therefore stated that

The park additions and preserve shall be managed for the following purposes, among others: To protect and interpret the entire mountain massif, and additional scenic mountain peaks and formations; and to protect habitat for, and populations of fish and wildlife including, but not limited to, brown/grizzly bears, moose, caribou, Dall sheep, wolves, swans and other waterfowl; and to provide continued opportunities, including reasonable access, for mountain climbing, mountaineering and other wilderness recreational activities.⁴

The purposes in the 1980 act differed from those in the 1978 proclamation in several ways. The 1980 act's reference to the “entire mountain massif,” for example, effectively encompassed the first three purposes laid out in the 1978 proclamation. The 1980 act broadened the protection of a specific caribou herd to include a broad spectrum of fish and wildlife. However, it omitted any mention of the Toklat Warm Springs, because the 1980 boundaries did not include that area. And subsistence was provided for in the 1980 act, though it was no longer an express purpose for the enlarged parkland.

As noted in Chapter 8, it had become apparent by the late summer of 1980 that Congress would pass an Alaska lands bill. On that basis, Alaska Area Director John Cook⁵ set into motion a process that resulted in the preparation of vacancy announcements for superintendents and other staff in the various newly-established parklands. During that same period, the early retirement of Superintendent Frank Betts at Mount McKinley, in March 1980, meant that a replacement was needed there as well. NPS ranger Charles A. (Chuck) Budge—until then the ranger-in-charge at volatile Wrangell-St. Elias National Monument—ably served as the park's acting superintendent for almost six months during the spring and summer of 1980. Budge, however, was in line to become Wrangell-St. Elias's first superintendent once Congress completed its deliberations.⁶

As a result, Cook cast about for a new superintendent. After screening numerous applicants, he hired Robert C. “Clay” Cunningham, a biologist

The 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act added federal lands to Mt. McKinley National Park and renamed the enlarged area Denali National Park and Preserve. NPS file, Denali National Park and Preserve

Superintendent Robert “Clay” Cunningham is shown here with his secretary, Marsha Karle, in July, 1982. He was the first superintendent to administer the newly-enlarged and renamed Denali National Park and Preserve. DENA 9025, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



who at that time was the Operations and Maintenance Chief at Gateway National Recreation Area in New York and New Jersey. Cook hired Cunningham, in part, because of his ability to think and act independently; he also sought that same quality in the other superintendents he hired in the weeks and months after ANILCA was signed. Cunningham began his job on August 24, 1980, knowing full well that the management of more than 4,000,000 acres surrounding the existing park—which was then managed minimally, and primarily out of Anchorage—would soon be his responsibility.⁷

As Cunningham settled into his new position, he soon recognized that Congress apparently looked with favor upon Denali, with the result being that the park’s budget increased dramatically during the early 1980s. During the 1979 fiscal year, Mount McKinley’s budget had been \$1.6 million, but a year later it shot up more than a million dollars. In the wake of ANILCA, the budget increased by almost a half-million dollars, and during the two succeeding years it rose more than \$700,000 each year, the result being that in 1983, the park’s budget was a lofty \$4.6 million—almost three times what it had been in 1979.⁸ The increased budget, in turn, meant that additional funds were available for staff (both permanent and seasonal), equipment, and other necessary items.

An increased budget, however, did little to address the many concerns related to how the newly-expanded park and the newly-established

preserve should be managed. Park staff knew, in the wake of Carter’s 1978 proclamations, that the agency had cobbled together a set of management regulations that provided specific advice on how the newly-established Alaska national monuments would be managed. There was a general recognition that, in some ways, the new national monument lands could be managed similar to NPS units elsewhere. But in Alaska, long-established lifeways demanded that management policies reflect distinct approaches to subsistence, access, cabin occupancy, vehicle usage, and kindred matters. Interim regulations to address these matters had taken effect in late December 1978, and a proposed rule was issued in June 1979.⁹ These remained in effect until ANILCA’s passage. Soon afterward, however, an NPS team began work on establishing a new set of regulations; some of those (i.e., most of the sections pertaining to public use and recreation) would be applied to all of Alaska’s park areas, while others (specifically the sections related to subsistence) would apply only in those park areas designated for subsistence use. (At Denali, subsistence uses were sanctioned in Denali National Preserve and in the newly-expanded portion of Denali National Park; the “old park,” however, would remain off-limits to subsistence activity.)¹⁰ In order to ensure that the public would have regulations that reflected Congress’s intent (as stated in ANILCA), the NPS rushed out a proposed rule in January 1981. The agency then had a public comment period, which included a series of public meetings, prior to finalizing its regulations in June 1981.¹¹

Cunningham and most of the other personnel who supervised the newly-established parklands had experience that was limited to the “Lower 48” parks. As a result, many were unsure regarding the nuances of the new law and of the regulations that followed. Fortunately, however, Cunningham was able to enlist the considerable talents of Dr. Lois Dalle-Molle, wife of the park’s resource management specialist. Dr. Dalle-Molle, an accomplished researcher, compiled a three-ring binder of legislative and administrative materials pertaining to ANILCA and the subsequent regulations. That compilation was repeatedly used to answer questions related to the management of Denali’s newly-acquired parkland; in time, superintendents of many other Alaska parks and monuments also benefited from the materials that she had compiled.¹²

The 1981 Bus Accident and its Ramifications

As noted in Chapter 8, the 1970s witnessed a major upsurge in park visitation; between 1971 and 1980 the number of recreational visitors to Mount McKinley National Park rose from about 45,000 to more than 215,000, an almost fivefold increase in nine years. In 1971, prior to the opening of the Parks Highway,¹³ private automobiles comprised most of the traffic along the park road, but beginning the following year, park road traffic

shrank considerably and consisted primarily of either NPS-sponsored shuttle buses or concessioner-sponsored tour buses. Most of the bus drivers along the park road during the 1960s and 1970s compiled an enviable safety record, but several accidents had resulted in passenger injuries, and a 1974 accident resulted in an elderly visitor’s death.

In 1981, more park visitors than ever before came to Denali National Park. The flow of those visitors in and out of the park, however, was marred on June 15, when the park road witnessed its worst bus accident ever. That evening, just after 8 p.m., an eastbound tour bus operated by Outdoor World, Ltd. rolled off the road just west of Thorofare Pass, tipped over on its side, and rolled down the hillside. (The mishap took place at mile 64.5 on the park road, about two miles east of Eielson Visitor Center and within a few hundred yards of the 1974 bus accident site.) Two elderly women died at the scene and a third died at Fairbanks Memorial Hospital; another 28 were injured, three seriously.¹⁴ A National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigative team soon arrived at the site; the road’s overall safety, however, was not in question. Shuttle bus traffic continued to Eielson and beyond, as it had before. Tour buses, however, immediately stopped

On June 15, 1981, an eastbound tour bus rolled off the park road just east of Thorofare Pass, resulting in the death of three passengers. Brad Ebel Collection



Road surface dust, shown here on Teklanika Flats, was one of the park road problems documented by Federal Highway Administration studies. Federal Highway Administration, from "1984 Road Improvement Study"



servicing points west of Stony Hill, a practice that continues to the present day.¹⁵ Recognizing that the NTSB report would take months to complete, and also in response to statements from those involved in the mishap, the park concessioner assumed all responsibility for the accident and settled the resulting claims.¹⁶ In 1983, however, the concessioner sued the federal government based on the idea that the NPS was negligent in the road's design, construction, and maintenance. That case dragged on for years, and the NPS ultimately assumed some financial responsibility.¹⁷

The NPS, during this period, was in the midst of reassessing the condition of the park road and evaluating ways to improve it. In early 1978, Congress became sufficiently concerned about the problem that it directed the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to complete an engineering reconnaissance study of the road. That study, completed later that year, gave the NPS five alternatives; they ranged from the minimally-intrusive application of a dust palliative to the construction of a 40-foot-wide paved road. Each of these alternatives were applied in one of two scenarios: if road gravel would be obtained within the park, and if external gravel sources (primarily from sites near Kantishna and Healy) were utilized. The FHWA recommended no specific alternative. NPS regional office personnel then wrote an addendum to the report in which they framed the FHWA within a broader context: "The most difficult aspect of managing the ... Park road is that the public disagrees as to what the road should be. Views are polarized; solutions for

even relatively simple problems on the road have become difficult because they are perceived as a prelude to more drastic or undesirable actions." The addendum then listed a litany of possible actions, along with the various stakeholders who supported or opposed each of them. The NPS, significantly, also failed to support any specific alternative. Perhaps because Congress was then in the midst of debating far larger Alaska actions—those which resulted in ANILCA—no near-term changes took place pertaining to the improvement or maintenance of the park road.¹⁸

Soon after the NPS released its February 1979 report, the agency launched a systemwide Road Inspection and Inventory Program (RIP), and in 1980 FHWA personnel completed a Road Inventory and Needs Study—much lengthier than its 1978 study—that numerically rated the sufficiency of structural, safety, and service characteristics along the park road. The study noted that the quality of the roadbed diminished steadily as the traveler headed west. A major cause of the road's poor condition, moreover, was the lack of gravel. Traffic-generated dust on the road east of the Teklanika River had removed almost all surface material, and the road from Teklanika to Wonder Lake had had no upgrading with additional surface material since the 1930s, making it "difficult through normal grading procedures to maintain a suitable riding surface." Blowing dust, moreover, continued to be a nagging problem.¹⁹

Agency personnel responded to the problem by recommending that the park commence a new road maintenance program that involved the

addition of new gravel; this solution allowed the park road to maintain its scenic, rustic character, but it did not involve additional widening or paving. That gravel, moreover, would be obtained within the park. The agency, therefore, sought additional funding for the purchase of rock crushing equipment. Congress, in response, included \$800,000 for that purpose in a supplemental appropriation bill that was signed into law on June 4, 1981.²⁰

By the time of the June 1981 bus accident, therefore, the agency was well aware that portions of the park road were in poor shape, and it had taken initial steps toward its improvement. It did not, however, feel that it was culpable for the bus rollover. Shortly after the accident, an NPS spokesperson (according to a news account) stated that the park road was “safe if driven at moderate speeds,” and more specifically that “the section of road where the tour bus overturned ... wasn’t seen as a trouble spot on the dirt and crushed-gravel road.”²¹ The accident, however, may have spurred the agency to speed up its road improvement plans. Later that year, personnel from the NPS’s Denver Service Center began work on an environmental assessment (EA) for the park’s road rehabilitation program; that document, which apparently reiterated FHWA recommendations that had been made prior to

the accident, was completed in February 1982. It stated that the park road, west of the Teklanika River, was “between 18 and 24 feet” wide, and recommended that “the established width of the road ... be retained [at] approximately 20 feet in width between the shoulders.” It further recommended that

The existing gravel surface would be rehabilitated through the placement of additional gravel fines, and coarse base and shoulder material in deteriorated sections. In general, the road would not be upgraded or widened beyond the previously established standard. Gravel material from in-park sources is available in adequate quality and quantity to produce an additional 4 to 6 inches of surface material for the 86.6-mile-long road. ... In some small sections the road would be raised by as much as 48 inches during rehabilitation efforts.²²

The EA’s preferred alternative also suggested potential gravel sources. It called “for the utilization of borrow material from existing gravel pits and streamside sources along the park road, as well as stockpiled material in the form of ‘river training’ or channeling structures herein referred to as

In 1982 a gravel crushing plant was set up on Stony Creek, where it operated from 1983 through 1985. Brad Ebel Collection



'berms.'" It noted that front-end loaders would feed "gravel material ... into a mobile rock-crushing/screening unit." The processed gravel would then be taken (if possible) directly to the road site; material not immediately used "would be stockpiled in previously disturbed pit and scrape sites unnoticeable to travelers along the road." The EA identified eight different potential borrow sites; they ranged from the Jenny Creek area (mile 10.2) west to Stony Creek Terrace (mile 59.8). Alternatives that recommended the use of gravel sources either outside of the park or in the Kantishna area were ruled out due to cost factors, and an alternative recommending that the road be paved was rejected for various environmental reasons.²³

Once the report was completed and approved, the park—thanks to support from Sen. Ted Stevens—received an additional \$500,000 congressional add-on to purchase the needed rock crusher. As a result, park maintenance crews bought a crusher from the U.S. Navy in late 1981 and set it up at Stony Creek Terrace during the summer of 1982.²⁴

NPS officials, who were unsure where gravel for the park road might be obtained, asked the FHWA in late 1981 to weigh in with a new study that would provide a "professional appraisal of rock sources along the park road." They also

asked for "professional assistance in survey, minor realignment, design of road profile and formulation of a construction plan."²⁵ That request resulted in a park road improvement study, which FHWA officials worked on during the 1982 field season. That same year, Congress passed the Surface Transportation Act of 1982,²⁶ and just a week before its passage, NPS officials decided to convene a Park Road Standards Task Force which, specifically, would review—on a national level—the agency park road standards that had first been formulated in 1968. The 1968 road standards report provided general guidance; it did not, however, mandate a specific width for any portion of Denali's park road.

In May 1983, in the midst of the task force's work, the FHWA completed its draft road improvement study for the Denali park road and asked NPS officials at the park, Alaska Regional Office, and Denver Service Center to review it.²⁷ The draft report recommended a minimum uniform 22-foot road width between Teklanika and Kantishna, which was two feet wider than DSC had recommended in its February 1982 EA. NPS officials were then asked to comment on the report, and Superintendent Cunningham on June 15 recommended to other NPS officials that about 29.9 miles of the 34.4 miles of park road between the Teklanika River and Eielson Visitor Center should have a "top width" of 24 feet.²⁸ (The park

The park road maintenance crew began widening Thorofare Pass in 1984. Brad Ebel Collection



In the summer of 1986 the rock crusher was moved from Stony Creek to the alluvial fan of a small creek near the Toklat Road Camp. NPS Roads Office Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve



superintendent may have suggested a wider road due to recommendations that the NPS task force was providing—which called for a 24-foot road for light-duty gravel roads with tour bus traffic²⁹—or he may have simply erred on the side of caution because the park, in the past ten years, had endured two catastrophic bus accidents on a narrow, winding portion of the park road.) Other NPS officials agreed with Cunningham’s assessment, and the final FHWA report, which was dated February 1984, called for a 24-foot roadbed (except in “rugged terrain” areas, where greater widths might be possible) for the 31-mile stretch of road between the Teklanika River and Thorofare Pass.³⁰

During the summer of 1983, gravel extraction operations began. (This was necessary to provide much-needed gravel for normal road maintenance, but also for additional materials should widening be necessary.) Wally Jones, a mechanic brought up from Gateway National Recreation Area, supervised the Stony Creek Terrace gravel crushing operations; these operations continued throughout the 1983 season and for the next two summers as well. Meanwhile, officials in the NPS’s regional office reviewed the park’s decision regarding road widths. Perhaps in search of a middle ground, they asked the FHWA for “further study” in 1984 of “steep and unstable areas at Eielson Bluffs, Polychrome Pass and Sable Pass,” all of which had been proposed for widening.³¹ The agency, as requested, provided the NPS the preliminary draft of a feasibility study for upgrading the park road at these sites. This study was quietly shelved.³²

The FHWA Road Improvement Study—both in its draft and final forms—had recommended four

priorities for widening and otherwise improving the 31 miles of road between Teklanika and Thorofare Pass, and based on those priorities, Cunningham asked his road crews to begin widening, in the summer of 1983, the 5.2-mile segment between Stony Hill and Eielson. (This was the section of road where both the 1974 and 1981 bus accidents had taken place.) During the following two summers, crews continued their work on that segment. In 1985, after the segment was completed, road crews were dispatched to next-highest priority area, the eight-mile stretch of road between the Teklanika River and Sable Pass (which included Igloo Canyon, where overflow ice problems had long bedeviled spring road-opening crews). But in mid-August 1985, Cunningham halted work on the second project because the approved improvement program in Igloo Canyon called for up to 48 inches of new material, and he was chagrined to see that such a deep fill was creating an unacceptably wide road corridor.³³ Given that change of heart, the remainder of FHWA’s park road improvement program was abandoned.

In 1986, the rock crusher was moved east to the alluvial fan adjacent to the western Toklat River bridge—another of the approved 1982 extraction sites—and a small amount of material was processed there, to be used in normal road maintenance work. In addition, the gravel screening plant was moved to the long-established Teklanika pit (mile 28.0); because of the excellent material available there, “only minimal crushing and screening” was needed. In later years, park maintenance crews continued to use the Teklanika pit. But because of provisions in the 1982 road improvement plan, Teklanika’s gravel was used only for annual maintenance work.³⁴



A park road maintenance crew replaced the wooden bridge at Hogan Creek with two large culverts in 1983. NPS Roads Office Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve



It is also important to note that the same planning effort that identified the poor condition of the park road also pointed out the dismal condition of many of the bridges in the road corridor. At the time of ANILCA's passage only one bridge along that route—the Igloo Creek Bridge, 34 miles west of the Parks Highway—was less than 20 years old, and many of the remaining bridges were treated timber bridges that were at or beyond their replacement age. A broad cross-section of interests—Kantishna miners, park staff, the general public, bus drivers, and FHWA staff—agreed that several of these bridges needed to be either replaced or repaired. A team of FHWA engineers who inspected the park's various bridges in 1980 concurred with that assessment.³⁵ As early as 1970, FHWA personnel had become concerned about the structural stability of the Savage River Bridge, a wooden trestle that dated from 1951. That agency had repaired the 284-foot-long bridge in 1975, but by 1980 officials recognized that the bridge needed to be replaced.³⁶

Goaded by a gravely-worded FHWA bridge-inspection report, concern turned into action in June of 1981, when Congress passed a supplemental funding bill that provided \$576,000 to replace the Savage River bridge.³⁷ Work on the bridge was completed in 1983. By this time, additional funds were being provided to replace other bridges. Between 1982 and 1985, at least nine small bridges were torn out and replaced with large culverts.³⁸ Then, during the summers of 1986 and 1987, contractors working for the FHWA replaced the two massive Toklat River bridges—each some 430 feet long—as well as the Moose Creek bridge near Wonder Lake.³⁹ As a result of that massive series of projects, the park road—by the end of 1987—sporting steel or reinforced-concrete bridges that were fully in conformance with federal guidelines. During the twenty years that have elapsed since that time, none of these bridges has been replaced, and they have remained sufficiently strong that the most recent (2007) inspection reports have noted all of the park bridges have an estimated remaining life of 20 years or more.⁴⁰

Renewing the Park Concessions Contract

Throughout the 1980s and on into the 1990s, perhaps the biggest challenge at the park—and certainly the issue with the highest public visibility—was how to protect the park's values in the face of increasing visitation. As noted in Chapter 8, recreational visitation to the park had zoomed up from 88,000 in 1972 (the first summer after the Parks Highway had opened, and the first year in which the park road was closed to most private vehicles) up to 216,000 in 1980.

The 1980s brought on even higher visitation (see Appendix A); in 1984 more than 395,000 people visited Denali National Park and Preserve, and in 1988 that number exceeded 592,000. Park staff were well aware that these visitors, despite their high volume, had come to Denali to seek what, to many of them, was a wilderness setting: scenic vistas, wildlife, an uncluttered landscape, and other values that were central to the goals set forth in the park legislation. Recognizing that the agency needed to provide visitors with a quality park experience, NPS staff did their best during this period to provide that experience while protecting the park's natural values.

When Congress was deliberating the Alaska lands act during the late 1970s, it was well aware that planning for the new parks (or for the expanded areas of existing parks) was a key aspect of the parks' success. As a result, Section 1301 of the bill that President Carter signed in December 1980 stated that the agency needed to “develop and transmit to the appropriate Committees of the Congress a conservation and management plan” for each new or expanded unit and have it completed within a five-year time frame.⁴¹

But because of the park's dramatically increasing visitation during this period, the agency did not need a congressional nudge to begin a planning process. In March 1980, planners from the Denver Service Center began the general management planning process for the park, and a task directive for the project was signed on May 30.⁴² DSC personnel recognized that the preparation of a GMP would require a multi-year effort, but because of the park's exploding visitation, a more immediate planning process was needed to address development-related problems. Agency planners, therefore, decided that the best near-term action was the preparation of a supplement to the park's interim development concept plan. (Agency officials had approved that plan in March 1976, but few of its recommendations had been acted upon.)⁴³

The primary impetus for the supplement to the interim DCP was the pressing need to issue a new park concessions contract. As noted in earlier chapters, Mt. McKinley National Park Company had signed a twenty-year concessions contract with the NPS in September 1967, and since that time the contract had changed hands to U.S. Natural Resources (1970), Outdoor World (1972), and ARA Services, Inc. (1978). The turnover in companies meant that the park concession grew from a fairly modestly-capitalized operation to one in which it became an increasingly small part of a large-scale services provider. This trend was indicative of what was taking place at NPS

George Fleharty had a long tenure as concessions representative, from the late 1960s to his retirement in 1989. Butterfield Photo, DENA 9021, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



concessions operations throughout the country. What made the situation distinct at Denali, however, was that the on-site concessions representative ever since the late 1960s had been the same individual: George Fleharty. Fleharty combined his business expertise with an obvious love for the park, and because he was effective as both a company representative and in his dealings with NPS personnel, he was a welcome, long-term presence at the park throughout this period. He would remain at the park, in fact, until his retirement in 1989.⁴⁴

Although ARA Services, in 1980, still had seven years to go on its concessions contract, the NPS moved to establish a new contract for two reasons. First, ARA had unsuccessfully attempted to establish a new twenty-year contract back in 1978, when the company was in the process of purchasing Outdoor World. In addition, NPS officials belatedly recognized that the “temporary” hotel that had been hastily constructed during the winter of 1972–73—in the wake of the September 1972 fire—had attained a measure of permanence and that the agency had no plans to replace it anytime soon. Agency officials further recognized that they wanted to effect some improvements to the hotel area, many of which they hoped would be paid for by the concessioner, and that the concessioner was seeking a long-term contract in order to justify any major new investments.⁴⁵ Inasmuch as the concessioner had already constructed a new hotel just outside the park (the McKinley Chalets, which had opened

in 1978 and had expanded in succeeding years), the concessioner did not attempt to pressure the NPS into replacing the McKinley Park Hotel with a more modern, sophisticated facility.⁴⁶

Given that scenario, NPS officials from Denver arrived at the park in 1980 to work on the supplement to the interim DCP, which was published in February 1981. The document listed a series of problems in the hotel/depot area; these problems were familiar to most park visitors and had been discussed among park officials since 1978 if not before. They included 1) replacing the concessioner’s dirt-floor bus shelter with a new, larger bus maintenance facility, 2) replacing the concessioner’s housing complex (in “the meadows” area) with a larger complex that is structurally sound and meets all health and safety codes, 3) expanding the hotel coffee shop and replacing the inadequate, year-old 40’ x 60’ “circus tent” with a proper site for NPS interpretive programs, 4) improving facilities for backpackers, both at the hostel and the Morino walk-in campground, and 5) reassessing the appearance and functions of both the filling station/general store and the hotel’s loading zone area. The agency laid out a suggested “long range development concept” with a series of intended outcomes, but the document made no specific recommendations on how, or by whom, these improvements should be underwritten. There was an implicit recognition, however, that the park concessioner would need to absorb many of these costs as part of any new concessions contract.⁴⁷

On February 20, shortly after officials had issued the *Supplement to the Interim Development Concept Plan*, the agency announced via the *Federal Register* that it proposed “to negotiate a concession contract with ARA Services dba Outdoor World Ltd.” at Denali for a 20-year period. Less than a month later, Interior Department officials “found it necessary to revise certain requirements of the proposed contract.” It invited any outside interests to submit new bids, but cautioned that the concessioner, due to provisions in the 1965 Concessions Policy Act, was “entitled to be given preference in the renewal of the contract and in the negotiation of a new contract.” Interested parties were given until May 1, 1981 to submit proposals to the NPS.⁴⁸

Several months later, NPS and ARA officials met to hammer out a new contract. Superintendent Cunningham, in a recent interview, recalled that he and a concessions specialist from the regional office met in Anchorage for a week-long meeting with Fleharty and five Philadelphia-based ARA attorneys. He noted that “it was David and Goliath. And I sat at the table, and I was determined

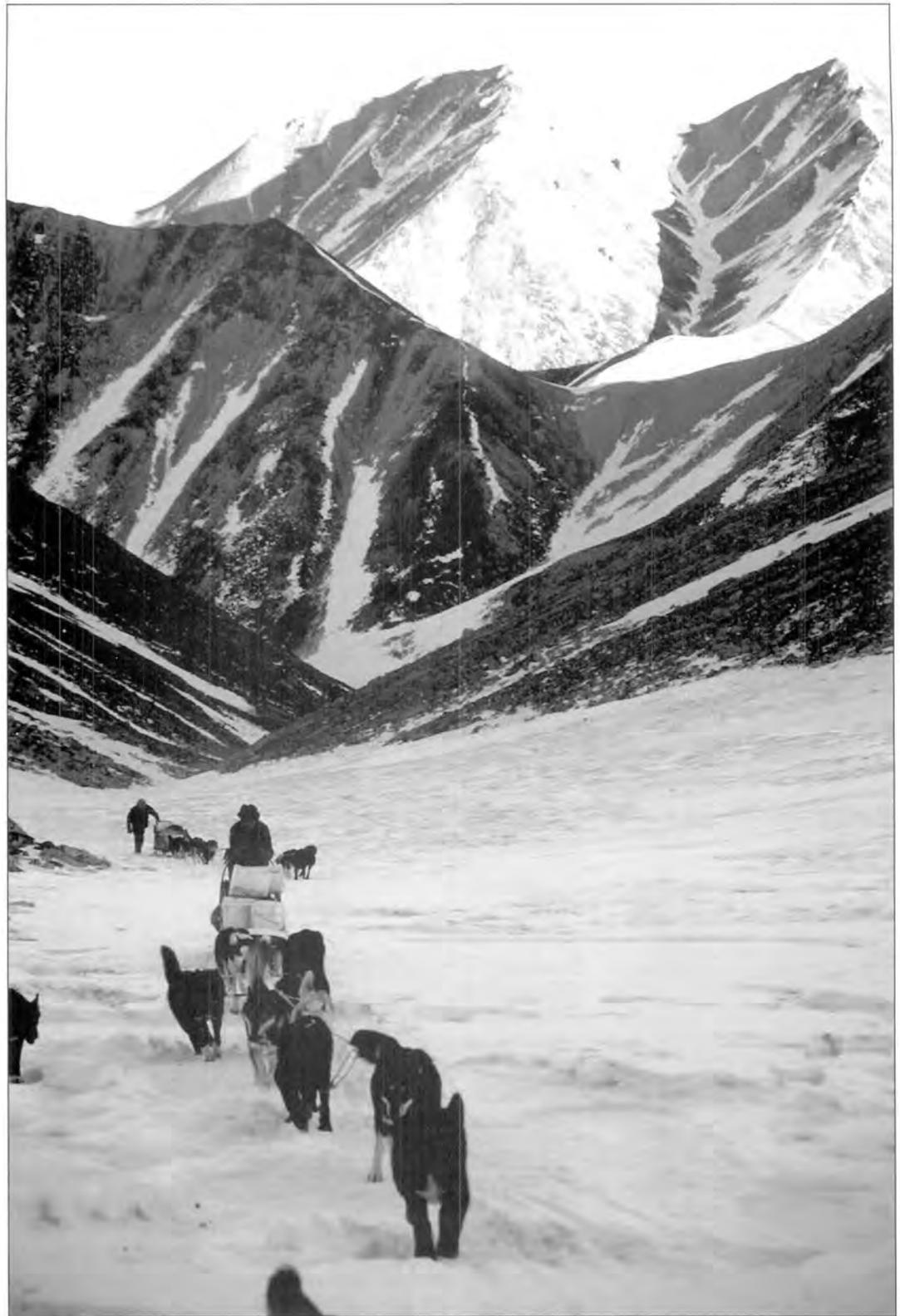


The original park entrance road passed the concession-run gas station and mercantile, on the right, and the Alaska Railroad depot, in the center. Federal Highway Administration, from "1984 Road Improvement Study"

to listen for four days before I uttered a word." What came out of that meeting was a 20-year concessions contract that was signed on September 26, 1981. As part of the pact, ARA agreed to underwrite a \$2.1 million building and improvement program. It also rewrote the relationship between the concessioner and the shuttle bus system; whereas the concessioner previously had an exclusive right to operate the shuttle bus system and was guaranteed a 10 per cent profit margin, the new contract removed the exclusive-rights clause. In return, however, the franchise fee rate dropped in half (from 1.5% to 0.75% of the concessioner's gross receipts) along with other favorable considerations.⁴⁹ Indeed, shuttle bus operations soon became independent of the concessioner, and beginning in 1982 the NPS solicited annual shuttle bus operations contracts. Those who were awarded the contracts supplied both the buses and the drivers; some of the drivers were veterans who had served shuttle-bus passengers for many years, while the experience of others had been limited to driving primary and secondary students to and from school.⁵⁰

While ARA was certainly the most visible company to most park visitors during this period,

the passage of ANILCA set into motion an entirely new class of tourism operators: that is, companies that operated under commercial use licenses, or CULs. For most of the previous sixty years, the vast majority of tourists had seen the park's scenic wonders and remarkable wildlife from the seat of a tour bus or shuttle bus, while a significant minority of other visitors (particularly beginning in the 1960s) had hoisted packs on their backs and taken self-guided trips into the park's backcountry. But beginning in the 1970s, an increasing number of visitors clamored for guided trips into the park's backcountry. Prior to President Carter's December 1978 proclamations, language in the park's concessions contract had effectively prevented most other for-profit businesses from conducting tours in the park.⁵¹ But on the margins of the "old park," and in the millions of acres of newly-established national monuments, there were a growing number of companies that provided flightseeing tours, backpacking guide services, river float trip services, photography and hunting guide services, and similar backcountry adventure opportunities. NPS officials recognized that these operators had a legitimate right to use the land as they had before, and language in ANILCA, passed two



Denali Dog Tours & Wilderness Freighters operated with a commercial use license in Denali National Park and Preserve, providing sled dog trips for park visitors and commercial gear hauling services for mountain climbers on the north side of Mt. McKinley. Will and Linda Forsberg are shown here hauling climbers' supplies to McGonagall Pass. Jon Nierenberg Collection

years later, similarly guaranteed that the operators that had historically provided commercial services within the new parklands would be able to continue providing those services.⁵²

Given that legal sanction, many companies began operating in the park with CULs. These licenses, which were inexpensive to obtain and easy to renew, allowed outside companies to

carry on a wide range of outdoor activities in the newly-established parklands, including both Denali's "new park" and the preserve. All that was needed was evidence of adequate insurance and an Alaska business license. The only real drawback to these licenses, from the operator's point of view, was that they could not erect any buildings or other permanent structures within a park unit. In addition, the fact that they were



By 1982, the Riley Creek Information Center had become an inadequate facility. DENA 11471, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

freely available to all qualified applicants prevented anyone from limiting competition. Given steadily rising visitor volumes, tourism operators readily agreed to obtain CULs in order to bring more visitors into the park. By 1983, almost 40 different operators were providing one or more services to Denali visitors under a commercial use license. The number of those operators remained fairly stable (between 35 and 50) for more than a decade.⁵¹ (See Figure 1.)

Parkwide Management Plans, 1981-1986

Once the concession contract had been signed, NPS staff was now free to tackle a broader range of general park issues and resume work on the park's general management plan (GMP). But Denver Service Center planners, in an apparent about-face, decided instead to concentrate on a Development Concept Plan (DCP) for the park road corridor. After noting that DCPs are "action plans that lead to the implementation of proposals contained in the parkwide GMP" (and thus follow the GMP's publication), they then noted that the road-corridor DCP at Denali was "being accomplished in conjunction with the general planning effort and will become an integral part of the GMP." They justified this approach based on 1) the deterioration of visitor and management facilities and the lack of a comprehensive plan to guide future improvement, 2) the recent passage of ANILCA suggested

that "there is reason to anticipate funding for a number of improvement projects within the park," and 3) the recently-completed concessions contract demanded major improvements in the hotel area. Planners may not have known it at the time, but the completion of the DCP—which purportedly was being done "in conjunction with the general planning effort"—would predate the GMP's completion by almost four years.⁵⁴

Planners worked on the road-corridor DCP during the winter of 1981-82, and in March 1982 they issued an environmental assessment that laid out the agency's options and suggested plans. The agency issued a flurry of recommendations, the most prominent of which included:

- a new interpretive/transportation center to replace the Riley Creek information center
- a major addition to Riley Creek campground
- a new camper services building adjacent to the campground
- a new audio-visual building adjacent to the hotel
- a new hotel coffee shop to replace the existing railcar facility
- a new dining room and housing for concessions employees
- a new bus maintenance shop

Figure 1. Denali Commercial Visitor Service Providers, 1982 to Present

	1982	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006
Air Taxi/Air Tours*	<i>3/1</i>	10	12	16	17	10	20	26	<i>13/9</i>	<i>13/9</i>	<i>10/7</i>	<i>12/7</i>	<i>11/5</i>
Backpacking Guide Service	7	11	12	15	6	3	5	10	9	5	5	3	2
Big Game Transporters	0	1	1	0	0	1	4	3	0	0	1	2	2
Dog Sled Services (various)	<i>0/1</i>	3	3	4	2	0	0	<i>1/1</i>	1	4	3	3	3
Flightseeing	*	*	*	*	7	4	9	<i>14/1</i>	<i>8/2</i>	<i>7/2</i>	<i>1/2</i>	*	*
Group Camping	0	0	0	5	6	1	9	10	12	13	14	9	13
Hiking	0	0	0	0	10	4	7	<i>9/2</i>	<i>10/3</i>	<i>5/3</i>	<i>8/3</i>	<i>3/3</i>	<i>2/2</i>
Horse Packing and Wagon Rides	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Hunting Guide Service	3	3	3	4	3	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Mountaineering (Old Park)	7	6	7	7	7	6	7	6	6	6	6	6	6
Mountaineering (New Park)	4	8	9	14	6	4	3	8	10	14	11	8	12
Photography Guide Service	4	0	0	6	2	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
River Trip Guide Service	9	6	10	8	8	3	5	<i>5/1</i>	<i>3/1</i>	1	1	1	1
Sport Fishing Guide Service	1	4	5	3	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Winter Backcountry Guides	4	8	7	6	9	3	7	6	2	2	3	1	2
TOTAL	26	40	45	48	49	24	47	64	61	65	56	47	53

Notes:

This chart is based on licenses granted, not on actual activities; thus the number of firms conducting the above activities may be much less than the figures noted above.

The businesses summarized above, in most cases, obtained Commercial Use Licenses to operated in the park. (Beginning in 1996, these licenses were called Incidental Business Permits, and in 2006 these were known as Concession Use Authorizations.) But in a few cases, the NPS limited the number of entrants. Numbers in bold indicate categories in which all businesses operated with Limited Concession Permits, while the double numbers in italics indicate both non-exclusive and exclusive entrants.

* – Flightseeing was considered part of the "Air Taxi/Air Tours" category from 1981 to 1988. After 1988, figures in the top row are for air taxi only. After 2003, flightseeing was once again categorized in the "Air Taxi/Air Tours" category.

Source of data: NPS/AKSO, Commercial Visitor Service Directory, various issues, 1981-2006.

- a relocation of the store and filling station
- at Morino, replacement of the campground with a picnic area
- replacement of the railroad hostel cars with an upgraded facility at Riley Creek
- a major upgrade at “C” camp (of both housing and maintenance facilities)
- an expansion of Teklanika campground for walk-in visitors
- a reduction in size of Wonder Lake campground to eliminate sites on the knoll
- various new roadside interpretive waysides and historical restoration projects
- the eventual renovation or replacement of Eielson Visitor Center

A key to the new plan was a growing recognition that the volume of buses (and thus passengers) was reaching unacceptably high levels. The report’s authors stated that “the park road corridor cannot continue to accommodate ever increasing numbers of visitors without affecting its role as the gateway to a remarkable wilderness area. ... to ensure a quality experience, the number of passengers carried on the shuttle system may have to be limited.” While “traffic along the road will be maintained at 1981 optimal levels,” they warned that “the shuttle system will not be able to serve all visitors who wish to use it,” and in order to ensure “a quality visit ... the number of visitors carried may have to be reduced.” In response to those pressures, planners took care to recommend a series of transportation and

interpretive upgrades along the 13-mile segment of paved road between the hotel and the Savage River bridge; and they further recommended the construction of a shelter and interpretive exhibits at the Primrose Ridge Wayside (mile 16.0) in anticipation of short excursions that would terminate at that point. Few large developments, by contrast, were recommended adjacent to the central and western sections of the park road.⁵⁵ The plan made no move to prohibit campers with passenger cars from staying at Sanctuary, Teklanika, Igloo, or Wonder Lake campgrounds, but planners made no moves to expand such uses either, instead emphasizing an interest in walk-in campers.⁵⁶

The Environmental Assessment (EA) was distributed beginning in May 1982, after which the public was given until the end of July to provide comments on the agency’s recommendations. Of the recommendations received, a majority expressed general support for the preferred alternative.⁵⁷ As a result, the final DCP that NPS officials approved in January 1983 was largely a duplication of the previous year’s EA. The only significant change was at Wonder Lake; while the EA had recommended that the campground be reduced at its current site, the final DCP urged that it be relocated (to just east of the park road, near the Wonder Lake spur road intersection) and expanded (from its current 20-23 sites to approximately 40 sites), with the existing campground converted to a day use area and interpretive wayside. This recommendation would not be considered final, however, pending the completion of an environmental assessment for the newly-proposed site.⁵⁸



This view shows Stony Hill Overlook on a busy summer day. Increasing visitation prompted recommendations for transportation and interpretive changes along the park road. Brad Ebel Collection



This grizzly bear is sampling a roadside interpretive sign before the protective cover has been removed in spring. Brad Ebel Collection

The DCP made a number of recommendations, several of which had first been broached in documents made preparatory to the issuance of the September 1981 concessions contract renewal. In the years to come, many of the promises made in this contract came to fruition. ARA completed a new auditorium (audio visual room) for NPS interpretive presentations in late 1982 and opened it in May 1983. This was followed by a bus main-

tenance facility in June 1984, a snack shop later that summer, and an employee dining room in 1985. The NPS helped out, too; using \$630,000 in Park Restoration and Improvements Program (PRIP) funding, it let a contract to rehabilitate the agency-owned (though concession-operated) employee dormitory. This contract, along with ancillary hotel-area support projects, was completed in 1983.⁵⁹

Once the DCP was completed, NPS planners set to work once again preparing the park's general management plan. Inasmuch as ANILCA had created ten new park areas and expanded three others, and inasmuch as Section 1301 of that act had demanded that GMPs be completed on all thirteen of these areas, there was by necessity an assembly-line quality in the way that agency planners produced these documents.⁶⁰ In practice, planners focused on four Alaska park areas first; draft GMPs for these parks were completed in 1982 and 1983, with final products issued in 1984 or early 1985.⁶¹ The other units had to wait; Denali's plan was doubtless in this latter category because agency planners had been otherwise occupied with the park road DCP.

A GMP team gathered and began work in January 1983, and the process "began in earnest" that May. The following February, the team issued a planning newsletter, and in March 1985, keeping to its self-imposed schedule, the agency released the draft park GMP.⁶² That plan offered two alternatives: 1) a continuation of present management with no new development south of the Alaska Range, and 2) developing a south-side visitor service and activity center, and a consequent reduction in private vehicle use and camping along the park road. NPS officials opted for the second alternative.⁶³ They prefaced their rationale by noting that recreational visitation between 1972 and 1984 had risen an average 25,000 visitor days per year, and also that "within the past 15 years ... the National Park Service has become aware that increasing traffic has been detrimental to opportunities for viewing wildlife along the park road corridor." They then stated that

The escalating demands on Denali's resources, coupled with the need to provide a visitor experience equal to the resources, is the single most critical problem facing park managers. The solution suggested by this plan is to expand recreational opportunities on the south side of Denali, then to modify use on the north to protect resource values. Based on current trends it is expected that the demand for use of Denali will increase by another 250,000 people per year [sic] by the end of the 10-year planning period. This amount of additional demand cannot be accommodated in the existing park road corridor without a significant decline in the visible wildlife, but it can be accommodated if the south side is developed as an alternative destination for visitors.⁶⁴

NPS officials appeared to base the goals of their plan on the results of an unpublished 1984 study, by biologists Frank Singer and Joan Beattie, that showed close correlations between increased traffic volumes and reduced opportunities to observe roadside wildlife, particularly moose and grizzly bear.⁶⁵ In order to increase wildlife viewing opportunities while simultaneously providing for increased visitation, the agency stated that it "would make additional use of the shuttle bus system and allow fewer private vehicles on the park road."

Given a 1984 flow of about 4,000 buses and 6,250 private vehicles, officials proposed during the short term that bus traffic would be allowed to increase, but total traffic could not vary from 1984 levels by more than 15 percent. Then, once new south-side facilities had been opened, additional buses would be allowed (up to 20 percent more than in 1984), but because private-vehicle traffic would be trimmed by some 45 percent, total traffic would be 17 percent less than in 1984. In order to reduce private vehicle traffic, officials planned to close three campgrounds currently open to vehicle campers—Sanctuary, Igloo, and Teklanika—primarily to "reduce... the potential for human/bear encounters in an area that already has a high incidence of problems." The small Wonder Lake Campground would remain open, however, as would campgrounds at Riley Creek and Savage River.⁶⁶ NPS officials recognized that "the proposed 20 percent increase in bus service will not be enough to accommodate all of the demand." The development of a viable south-side facility, however, would generate "additional recreational opportunities, resulting in a leveling off of demand for transportation services and accommodations in the northern part of the park." The potential to develop commercial visitor facilities in the Kantishna area was, to the NPS, admittedly worrisome because of their effect on traffic levels; thus the draft GMP stated that any such development "will be considered incompatible with the planned purposes of the park."⁶⁷

In many other ways, the draft GMP's recommendations along the road corridor were reiterations of what the NPS had suggested in its 1983 DCP. But several of the 1983 recommendations had already been implemented, as noted above, and the 1985 plan also had a few new ideas or revisions as well. The primary new recommendation was the construction of a new Denali Park Hotel, rather than renovating the existing hotel "to meet codes" as in 1983. (See section below for a more detailed discussion of this topic.) In addition, the idea of moving the Wonder Lake campground a mile away was scrapped in favor of constructing a new



This view of the Alaska Range is taken from a proposed development site on Curry Ridge. National Park Service Photo

campground adjacent to the existing one. NPS officials still advocated a new park visitor center between the railroad tracks and Alaska Highway 3; this new facility, however, was now termed a visitor access center rather than an interpretive/transportation center (as listed in the 1982-83 road corridor development concept plan).⁶⁸

The NPS's south side recommendations, however, were entirely new. Noting that "the most striking vantage point for viewing Mount McKinley through the corridor opened by the Ruth Glacier occurs on the south end of Curry Ridge," agency officials proposed the site for a "visitor service and activity center" which would include "a full service lodge oriented to views of the Alaska Range and the Chulitna River Valley." This area, apparently pushed by Alaska Division of Parks officials, was located not within the national park but on state land in Denali State Park; as a consequence, NPS officials—operating from a July 1984 cooperative agreement—fully recognized that the proposal "relies heavily upon the Alaska state park system for the implementation of an activity center." The two entities promised to work together during the final site selection process.⁶⁹ The plan implied that the public sector would construct the activity center, while private enterprise would finance and build the hotel. Although initial GMP-related ideas called for "a new road to the southern flank of Denali National Park" and "a tramway to Ruth Glacier," the draft GMP proposed little development (only primitive cabins and mountain huts) within the boundaries of the national park's south side.⁷⁰

The draft GMP was distributed to the public in early April 1985, and in early June agency officials held public meetings on the plan in various nearby cities.⁷¹ The public was given until July 15 to send comments, and at this time the Denali plan—which was still being compiled under the same timetable as eight other Alaska GMPs—was still on track to be completed in December 1985, as Sec. 1301 of ANILCA had mandated. But the response to the various Alaska park GMPs was enormous and, according to one news article, "state officials, environmental and development interests complained [that] more time was needed if all plans were to be digested and reviewed over simultaneous comment periods." As a result, the NPS (apparently with Congressional authorization) agreed on November 3 to extend the deadline. A month later, agency planners issued a series of revised draft GMPs, Denali included. They then opened a new public comment period (from December 9, 1985 through February 9, 1986) and did not complete the final park plans until late 1986.⁷²

The many changes in Denali's revised draft GMP reflected the massive number of comments that the public had provided. Several of those changes suggested significant policy shifts regarding how the agency would balance the needs of visitors while still protecting the park's wildlife and other natural values. To implement those twin goals, park officials still planned to make additional use of the shuttle bus system while allowing fewer private vehicles on the park road. Stage one of a three-stage plan called for "decreasing vehicle use by campers, professional photogra-

phers, NPS employees, and people traveling to Kantishna” by having the campgrounds west of Savage River accessible only by shuttle bus, for the shuttle bus “to be used increasingly” by NPS employees and Kantishna visitors, and for a reduction in the number of private vehicles driven by professional photographers. In stage two, which would be implemented “once an adequate number of campsites are available outside the park entrance,” the Wonder Lake Campground would remain open but the three other west-end campgrounds would close. Implementing this stage would reduce private vehicle use by 45 percent. Once that goal was reached, stage three could then begin, in which tour and shuttle bus use would “be allowed to increase to a level that does not unacceptably affect wildlife behavior.” Given this scenario, it was predicted that—as in the draft plan—bus traffic could increase 20 percent from its 1984 levels (thus allowing an additional 24,000 visitors per year) while simultaneously decreasing total park-road traffic by 17 percent.⁷¹ Regarding south-side development, the revised GMP recommended only two changes in the scenario that had been outlined in the initial draft nine months earlier: the elimination of the proposed cabins and wilderness huts, and the prohibition of helicopters to access Ruth Glacier.⁷⁴

After the revised draft was released, the public was given until February 9, 1986 to provide feedback on the plan. Officials considered the new round of comments and modified the plan as needed. That June, park and regional officials approved the plan; it was then sent on to Washington, where it was approved by NPS Director William Mott in October and Assistant Interior Secretary William Horn in November.⁷⁵

The final GMP was much like the revised draft. The proposal discussed previously about shutting down three park-road campgrounds was abandoned; park authorities did, however, state that “eventually ... visitors will no longer be able to drive their private vehicles to their campsites.” The Wonder Lake Campground, it noted, would be enlarged by ten spaces.⁷⁶ And as for south-side development, all parties still favored a Curry Ridge site (within Denali State Park). However, perhaps because Alaska in 1986 was in the midst of an “oil bust” which had a catastrophic influence on the state’s finances, the final plan clearly stated the need for private enterprise—not the state or federal governments—to play a key financial role in the construction of the hotel and related facilities. It noted that

The Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation will serve as

project lead and make final decisions regarding the use of state lands. The National Park Service will work with the state in the joint development and operation of a visitor service and activity center. ... Private sector participation will be essential for the development of commercial components of the south-side development, primarily the lodge and related facilities and utilities.

The NPS, furthermore, stated that it planned to write an environmental impact statement for a south-side DCP before any development projects began in that area.⁷⁷



A key part of the public process that led to the recommendations in the final plan was the agency’s decision (advocated by the agency’s new regional director, Boyd Evison) to write a Development Concept Plan regarding the park hotel. As part of that process, NPS officials would decide whether the 13-year-old “temporary” hotel would it be replaced with a new onsite hotel, replaced with a new hotel nearby, demolished, or left as is. That process, and subsequent hotel-related events, are discussed in a section below. In addition, the plan gave a green light to many planned actions that had first been brought forth in the 1982-83 road-corridor DCP, or even earlier (such as the negotiations that led to the 1981 concessions contract). The final GMP, for example, recommended that the existing hostel (which was several railroad cars on a siding near the railroad

Meant to provide intermediate-scale accommodations, the youth hostel consisted of 3 railroad bunk cars, which were utilized from 1973 to 1987. DENA 12-78, DENA Museum Collection; NPS Interp. Collection, #453, Denali National Park & Preserve

depot) be closed. That same summer of 1986, in fact, the concessioner “was notified that for numerous safety code violations ... the railroad cars at the park hotel could no longer be used,” and the following year the old hostel cars were hauled away. And in 1991, another GMP recommendation—a new concessions housing unit, locally known as “the tapeworm,” was opened.⁷⁸ Other recommendations, however, were put off until later or were never enacted.

Wilderness and Backcountry Management

Section 1317 of ANILCA stated that Denali and other Alaska national park units needed to consider wilderness in their near-term planning efforts. It stated that

Within five years from the date of enactment of this Act, the [Interior] Secretary shall ... review, as to their suitability or nonsuitability for preservation as wilderness, all lands within units of the National Park System ... in Alaska not designated as wilderness by this Act and report his findings to the President. ... The President shall advise the Congress of his recommendations with respect to such areas within seven years from the date of enactment of this Act.

As noted in Chapter 8, Congress in its ANILCA deliberations had concluded that the vast majority of the “old park”—everything except the headquarters-entrance area, Wonder Lake and vicinity, and 150 feet on either side of the park road—would be part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.⁷⁹ The passage of ANILCA, however, set in motion a process to decide how much of the 3,813,818-acre addition to Denali National Park and Preserve should be added to the wilderness system.

Given ANILCA’s mandate, NPS officials incorporated wilderness studies as part of the general management planning process that began in 1982 and 1983, and Wilderness Suitability Review (WSR) sections were included in each of the various draft, revised draft, and final GMPs that were produced for the various Alaska NPS units in 1984, 1985, and 1986. These WSRs, at least initially, were brief and inconclusive. The WSR in Denali’s draft GMP (issued in March 1985), for example, was just three pages long. This “preliminary analysis” duly noted that “lands in other than full federal ownership are ineligible for wilderness designation,” and it further noted that the area surrounding Ruth Glacier was also ineligible “because of the nature of the visitor use proposed” for that area. The plan did not

specify any acreage figures, but the accompanying map suggested that with the exception of the Ruth Glacier corridor, virtually all of the newly-acquired park and preserve lands were “suitable for wilderness designation.”⁸⁰ The park’s revised draft GMP, issued in December 1985, was almost as vague. It stated that the Kantishna mining district was “ineligible for wilderness designation because of the disturbance to the landscape by mining and the road system,” and due to changing development priorities, planners decided that the Ruth Glacier area was now eligible for wilderness designation.⁸¹ And the final (November 1986) kept the same wilderness recommendations as the revised draft, noting that “the approximately 3.9 million acres determined suitable for wilderness designation combined with the areas already designated amount to approximately 95 percent of the park complex.”⁸² NPS staff later made a more exact accounting of these boundaries and determined that the land in the combined park and preserve that was “suitable for wilderness designation” amounted to 3,726,343 acres rather than approximately 3.9 million acres as stated in the final GMP.⁸³

Clearly a more specific process was needed to determine the wilderness viability of lands in Denali and the other Alaska parks, so in 1987 personnel from the agency’s Denver Service Center commenced an effort to prepare a series of wilderness-related environmental impact statements.⁸⁴ By February 1988 the first wilderness-related draft EISs (at other NPS units) were being published and available for public comment, and a month later, NPS officials made public their initial recommendations regarding wilderness additions at Denali.

Available information from this period suggests that the wilderness viewpoints of NPS staff contrasted sharply with those of William P. Horn, who served as the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. At one point during the process that led to the draft EIS for Denali, Alaska Regional Office (ARO) staff put forth the recommendation that of the 3.72 million acres in the wilderness study area, 3.56 million acres should be designated as wilderness. But by March 1988 the Alaska Region’s planning chief, Linda Nebel, told the local press that the agency would be recommending only 1.5 million additional acres of wilderness for Denali National Park; excluded from wilderness consideration would be an additional 900,000 acres in the “new park” and all 1.3 million acres of Denali National Preserve.⁸⁵ That recommendation, however, was still subject to change, because when the draft wilderness EIS for the unit was completed in mid-June 1988, the number of acres

recommended for wilderness had increased. Of the 3,726,343 acres in the park unit's wilderness study area, 2,254,293 acres—located entirely within the “new park”—were recommended for wilderness designation.

The acreage recommended in the June 1988 draft EIS, if enacted by Congress, meant that 93 percent of Denali National Park, and 73 percent of the combined park and preserve, would become part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. As noted above, it was a hard-fought compromise; it was 750,000 acres larger than had been recommended in March but 1.3 million acres less than ARO planners had recommended. The only park areas not recommended in the June 1988 draft EIS were six or seven isolated polygons, none comprising more than 36,000 acres, along the unit's exterior boundary. Some of these exclusions were brought about by a multiplicity of mining claims; others were to allow for the development of trail systems or public use cabins; and still others were to foster planned land exchanges. Much to the chagrin of conservation organizations, the document did not explicitly state why Denali National Preserve lands were excluded from wilderness consideration (and the agency further noted that “the purpose of this EIS is to evaluate the impacts of

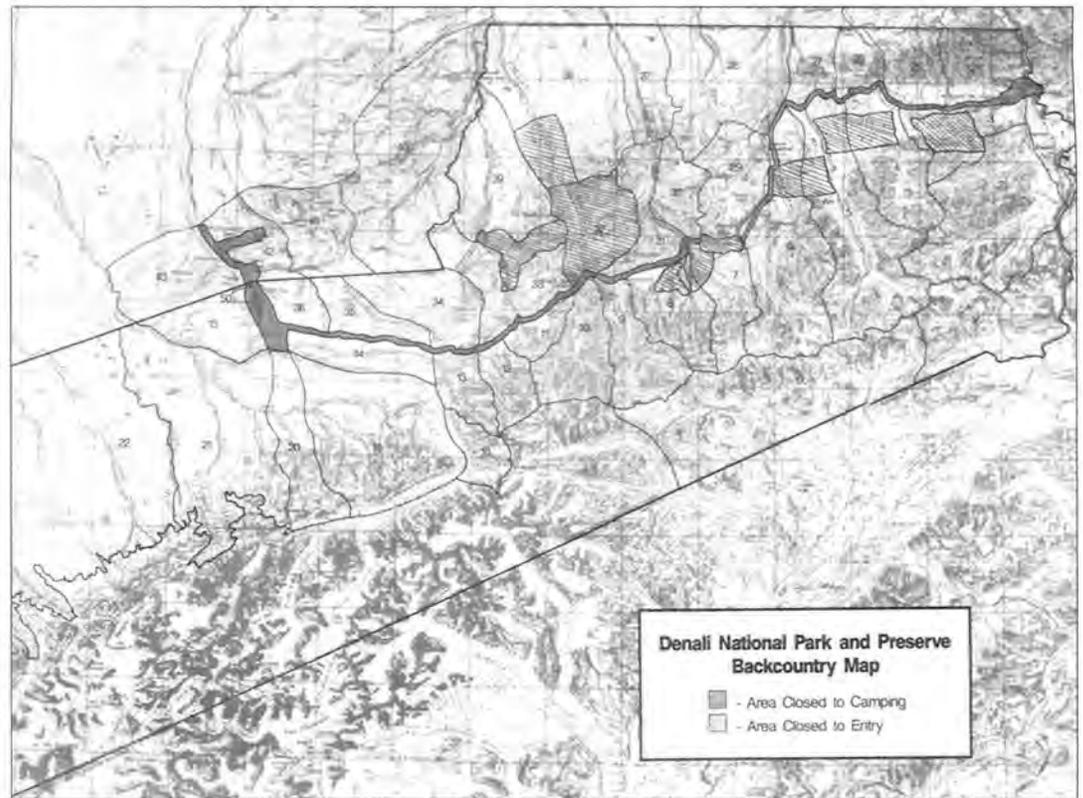
the proposed action, not to provide a justification for it”), but a diverse land ownership pattern and a desire to accommodate nearby recreational developments appear to have played key roles in the agency's decision.⁸⁶

After the agency issued its draft wilderness recommendations for Denali and the other Alaska park units, it held numerous public hearings; of those that pertained specifically to the Denali proposal, one was held in Arlington, Virginia on July 19, and three were held in Alaska (in Anchorage, Talkeetna, and Fairbanks) between July 18 and July 20. The public was given 67 days—from June 17 until August 29—to comment on these plans.⁸⁷ A month later, the NPS issued its final Denali wilderness recommendations, which were identical to those in its June 1988 draft document. On December 1, 1988, NPS Director William Penn Mott issued a record of decision recommending the addition of 2,254,293 acres within Denali National Park to the National Wilderness Preservation System. That recommendation, however, was never signed by the designated authority, who was Assistant Interior Secretary William P. Horn. As a result, the NPS's recommendation was not forwarded to the President, and Congress has not yet been given the opportunity to weigh its merits.⁸⁸

Visitors' use of the backcountry increased dramatically during the 1980s. NPS Interp. Collection, #4248, Denali National Park and Preserve



Map 1. This 43-unit version of the backcountry map was utilized from 1984 until 2006. DENA 9169, Box Z, Administrative Records Coll., Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



Throughout the 1980s, and on into the 1990s, the agency continued to manage Old Park backcountry use at the field level, much as it had since the backcountry management plan had been put into effect in the mid-1970s. The use of the backcountry increased dramatically during this period, the result being that many of the more popular backcountry zones quickly filled to capacity and many would-be backpackers had to choose either less-desirable areas or avoid the most popular summertime periods. To aid in backcountry management, park staff in 1984 decided to increase the number of “old park” backcountry zones from 35 to 39. In addition, managers in the wake of ANILCA recognized that most of the “new park” located between Stampede Mine and the Brooker Mountain-Eagle Gorge area was also popular with backpackers; as a result, four new backpacking zones were added within a year or two of ANILCA’s passage (See Map. 1). These 43 zones—39 in the “old park” and another four in the “new park”—remained until 2006, when the park’s backcountry plan was approved.⁸⁹

An important aspect of backcountry management involved various land exchanges proposed for acreage in the newly-acquired portions of the park unit. As noted in previous chapters, the NPS in 1963 was able to acquire the last of the privately-owned parcels in Mount McKinley National Park. However, the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in 1980, which created a newly-expanded park and a new preserve, brought tens of thou-

sands of acres of non-federal land within the unit’s boundaries.

Two years later, an Interior Department directive called for the preparation of land management plans for all park units that contained non-federal lands. The NPS, in response, attached a land protection plan to the general management plan that was prepared between 1983 and 1986. The plan noted that the combined park and preserve contained 70,576 acres of non-federal lands, plus an additional 8,400 acres of unpatented mining claims for which the federal government owned the land but not the mineral estate. These parcels and claims were concentrated in four areas: 1) the Kantishna Hills, which contained 292 patented and unpatented mining claims, 2) the Dunkle Hills area, which contained an additional 163 unpatented mining claims, 3) an area west of Cantwell, which contained selected lands from the state and both regional and village corporations, and 4) a broad area east of Lake Minchumina, which contained a large (47,843-acre) block of regional corporation selected lands, along with scattered village corporation lands and small tract entries. Almost all of the 60,948 acres claimed by the regional or village corporations, at that time, were still in the application process; the NPS, as a result, was unsure how much of this acreage would eventually be deeded to the applicants.⁹⁰

The NPS, in its land protection plan, made four broad recommendations. 1) In the Kantishna area, the agency recognized that “the use of

patented mining claims for new visitor facilities would conflict with the objective of the general management plan to reduce the traffic in the road corridor.” It therefore decided “to acquire ... the surface estates to the mining properties to preclude large-scale recreational development.” And regarding the area’s numerous unpatented mining claims, the agency recommended the completion of validity determinations “as quickly as feasible to determine status.” 2) Along the Swift Fork at the west end of the park unit, and near the Ruth Glacier terminus, the agency recommended that the boundary be modified (through both the addition and deletion of land) in order “to follow natural geographic and hydrographic features whenever possible.” 3) It recommended that the NPS expand the park by incorporating the three “wolf townships” within its boundary. It planned to do so via a land exchange with the State of Alaska. 4) In the Dunkle Hills, an interagency work group in December 1984 recommended that “mining activities could commence on the undeveloped valid unpatented sites.” And assuming the resumption of mining activities, the NPS recommended—and the Alaska legislature similarly resolved—that the entire “Dunkle township” be deleted from the park via land exchanges. Owing to the fluid nature of the selection process as it pertained to Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act land applications, the agency made no recommendations regarding the Minchumina or Cantwell areas.⁹⁰

During the 1980s, several land exchange proposals were considered between the NPS and the State of Alaska. In 1982, the state announced its intention to develop 14,000 acres of its land near McCarthy, in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. In response, the NPS offered several parcels in or near various NPS areas in the state. Two of those parcels were near Denali; one was a tract of “about 2,500 acres” just west of the Yanert Fork-Nenana River confluence, and another was “about 22,000 acres in the Ohio Creek Valley,” near Hurricane. That land swap, however, was never consummated.⁹¹ In the park’s 1983-84 environmental impact statements for the *Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study Report*, one alternative—which proved popular with miners and local residents—called for the deletion of the Kantishna Hills and Dunkle Mine areas from the park, perhaps in exchange for the “wolf townships” corridor.⁹¹ (See Chapter 14.) This action brought forth some communication with state DNR officials along with an Alaska State Senate resolution that was introduced in January 1985 and signed by Governor Sheffield a month later.⁹⁴ And, as noted above, the agency’s 1985-86 land protection plan noted several areas that might be added to, or deleted from, the park.

In the late summer of 1987, the NPS and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources—acting on recommendations in the recently-approved park land protection plan—teamed up to recommend a series of land swaps: in the Stampede corridor (“wolf townships”) area, the Swift Fork area at the west end of the park, and in the Dunkle Mine and Ruth/Tokositna areas. During the course of six public meetings in September and October, comments were “mostly positive” regarding the proposed Swift Fork and Ruth/Tokositna boundary adjustments. But virtually everyone who attended—miners, hunters, local politicians, conservationists, and others—decried the proposal as it pertained to the Stampede and Dunkle areas.⁹⁵ Early the following year the National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA)—following up on issues raised in 1987—published a report suggesting a sweeping series of park boundary recommendations. These largely mirrored those of the land management plan. Beyond that, the NPCA report recommended several additional areas of additions and deletions to conform to “natural geographic and hydrographic features.” In the “wolf townships” area, the group recommended a fairly modest acreage addition, combined with a deletion in the townships to the north, and it also recommended a fairly substantial “Sushana/Toklat Addition” of about 60,000 acres, most of which had been included in the 1978 Denali National Monument proclamation but had been removed when the park boundaries had been finalized two years later.⁹⁶ Congress has not yet acted on any of these proposals.

Subsistence Issues

When Congress passed ANILCA in December 1980, it put Alaska park managers (and those managing other Alaska conservation areas) squarely in the business of subsistence management. Ever since the early 1970s, when the NPS had released its first master plans and environmental statements for the various proposed park areas, there had been a widespread recognition that the Alaska parks, unlike those in most of the “Lower 48” states, would be managed in a way that sanctioned the continuance of traditional lifeways—both Native and non-Native—in most if not all of the newly-established park acreage. By early 1977, when Congress began its first earnest debates of the Alaska lands question, the NPS had cobbled together a series of increasingly-sophisticated policy statements on the need for continuing subsistence activities in the proposed parklands. The various legislative bills addressing the Alaska lands question, however, were by no means consistent in their approach toward subsistence management; some urged its implementation in all of the proposed parklands,



In the 1980 park additions, the harvest of wild plants, fish and game by local residents was provided for in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. That practice continues to this day. Miki & Julie Collins Collection

while others were more selective. During the 95th Congress, the bill that passed the House in May 1978 sanctioned subsistence activities in all of the new and expanded NPS units, but the bill that emerged from the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee that October allowed subsistence only in a few proposed units, primarily those in northwestern Alaska. As mentioned in Chapter 8, however, Congress was unable to reconcile the substantial differences between

the two bills before it adjourned that year. As a result, President Carter established 17 new national monuments, including a 4.18-million-acre Denali National Monument. Shortly afterward, Interior Department officials fashioned regulations to govern the newly-established monuments; these proposed regulations noted that two nearby communities—Lake Minchumina and Telida—would be designated “resident zone communities,” where all residents would have

subsistence harvesting privileges on national monument lands.⁹⁷

Because of Congress's failure to pass a comprehensive Alaska lands bill, legislators agreed to tackle Alaska lands questions again when the 96th Congress commenced. The bill that passed the House in May 1979 sanctioned subsistence activities in all of the proposed units except Kenai Fjords National Park. The bill that emerged from the Senate in August 1980—and which became law—was more complex; it fully sanctioned subsistence activities in some units, it sanctioned subsistence in other units “where such uses are traditional,” and prohibited subsistence activities in still other units. As it pertained to Denali, two management options emerged; in the newly-added parklands, subsistence was sanctioned on a “where traditional” basis, but—because Title II did not apply to existing units—subsistence remained off-limits within the “old park” boundaries.⁹⁸

The passage of ANILCA set in motion a rapid schedule of deadlines, which were intended to institutionalize a federal subsistence management bureaucracy and to formalize subsistence-related relationships between state and federal officials. The first of these deadlines concerned the passage of NPS regulations that related to subjects with which the other park units had little experience; subsistence, along with access, were major elements covered in these new regulations. On January 19, 1981, less than two months after ANILCA was passed, the NPS issued a new “proposed rule” regarding the newly-established national park units. These proposed regulations were then subject to public comment, and on June 17, 1981, the agency issued its final regulations. One element of these final regulations stated that the new park and preserve would have four designated resident zone communities; these included Cantwell and Nikolai, as well as Lake Minchumina and Telida which had been proposed two years earlier. Not long afterward, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) agreed to set up a series of six regional advisory councils (RACs) dealing with subsistence issues, and in May 1982, Interior Secretary James Watt certified that the state's subsistence program was consistent with ANILCA guidelines.⁹⁹

More specific to park management, NPS officials recognized that Section 808 of ANILCA called for the agency to establish subsistence resource commissions (SRCs) related to Denali National Park (and six other Alaska national parks and monuments) within one year of the Act's passage. As a result, federal officials worked frantically

in late 1981 to appoint appropriate commission members.¹⁰⁰ Regional NPS official Robert Belous dutifully told an ADF&G meeting on December 1, 1981—one day before the Congressionally-imposed deadline—that the NPS had fulfilled its mission in this regard. Little more could take place with the SRCs for the time being, however; the state and the various RACs had not yet appointed their members (indeed, the various ANILCA-based RACs had not yet been formally established), and the NPS had not been provided a budget that allowed the SRCs to get off the ground. Throughout this period, most subsistence-related problems at Denali were resolved by Management Assistant Ralph Tingey and other park personnel.¹⁰¹



During the mid-1980s, subsistence management in the parks became more sophisticated when the agency hired its first staff—Louis Waller, in the regional office—whose sole job was to organize the agency's subsistence efforts. During this period, the agency was fully involved with its general management planning process, and due to Waller's influence, each iteration of the various park GMPs showed an increasing regard for subsistence-related concerns.¹⁰² Finally, the agency, in the spring of 1984, was able to actively establish the Denali National Park Subsistence Resource Commission, along with six similar commissions for other park units. Denali's first meeting, which was held in concert with the Lake Clark SRC, took place in Anchorage on May 10-11, 1984. For the next several years, meetings of this advisory body were held every six months or so.¹⁰³ Unlike several of the other SRCs, whose relationship with the NPS was often contentious, the Denali SRC cooperated with the NPS on a number of issues. Much of that cooperation was due to the presence of Florence Collins, a Lake Minchumina (later Fairbanks) resident who artfully guided the SRC for more than twenty years. The details of what this commission has accomplished are noted in another NPS publication. This advisory body continues to meet approximately twice each year at sites in and around the park.¹⁰⁴

The efforts of the Denali Subsistence Resource Commission were led and coordinated by SRC Chairperson Florence Collins and NPS Subsistence Manager Hollis Twitchell. Julie Collins Collection

Subsistence Resource Commission members and park staff worked diligently together on subsistence related issues and formulation of recommendations. NPS Photo



Controversy over Snowmachines

An issue that had more than a passing relationship with subsistence was the legal basis for snowmachine usage at Denali. As noted in Chapter 7, NPS rangers used a Bombardier snowmachine (with varying degrees of success) for patrol work between 1960 and 1963. Occasional snowmobile use continued in later years as well; as superintendent Daniel Kuehn discovered when he arrived at the park in 1973, various employees and their families owned snowmachines and used them within the park. But on April 1, 1974, the NPS implemented a regulation that prohibited snowmobile use in almost all park units. Kuehn, perhaps in response, ordered the cessation of all snowmachine use in Mount McKinley National Park.¹⁰⁵

By the early 1970s, planners for a variety of government agencies were well aware that snowmachine use among Alaskans was becoming increasingly common. The final environmental statement for the park additions, published in October 1974, made no decisions as to the legality of snowmachine use for subsistence activities, citing the need for more field study; it did, however, state that the agency would “not permit intensive recreational activities” (such as snowmobiling) “on the lands included within the park.”¹⁰⁶ President Carter’s December 1978 proclamation, which established Denali National Monument, made no mention about whether snowmachine access, or any other forms of access, would be specifically allowed; it did, however, state that “the opportunity for the local residents to engage in subsistence hunting is a value to be protected and will continue under the administration of

the monument.”¹⁰⁷ Just six months later, the NPS issued a proposed rule which established at least temporary regulatory guidance for the newly-proclaimed monuments; among its other provisions, it stated that snowmobiles “would be permitted only in specific areas or on specific routes.”¹⁰⁸

More permanent regulations regarding snowmobile usage had to await the December 1980 passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. Section 811(b) of ANILCA, following Carter’s lead, stated that “Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act or other law, the [Interior] Secretary shall permit on the public lands appropriate use for subsistence purposes of snowmobiles ... by local residents, subject to reasonable regulation.” Denali, as noted above, was a conservation unit where subsistence was sanctioned “where such uses are traditional.”¹⁰⁹ Section 1110(a) of the Act gave snowmobiles an additional avenue for access to Denali. It stated that

Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act or other law, the Secretary shall permit, on conservation system units ... the use of snowmachines (during periods of adequate snow cover) ... for traditional activities (where such activities are permitted by this Act or other law) and for travel to and from villages and homesites. Such use shall be subject to reasonable regulations by the Secretary to protect the natural and other values of the conservation system units ... and

shall not be prohibited unless ... the Secretary finds that such use would be detrimental to the resource values of the unit or area.¹⁰⁰

Six months after ANILCA's passage, the final park regulations—reflecting Congressional intent—stated that “the use of snowmobiles ... employed by local rural residents engaged in subsistence uses is permitted within park areas...”¹⁰¹ No provisions were made for recreational snow-machiners in Alaska's parks.

NPS officials, however, came to recognize that ANILCA, for all its protections, had not prohibited recreational snowmachine access into the former Mount McKinley National Park. To correct that oversight, park officials began as early as February 1982 to craft regulations closing the “old park” to snowmachines.¹⁰² By early April 1983, the Interior Department had completed its work, and it proposed in the *Federal Register* a regulation for “the permanent closure of certain areas within Denali National Park and Preserve ... to snowmobiles” and other motorized vehicles. Given that announcement, a Pandora's box of controversy ensued. Throughout this period, both user groups and conservationists had assumed that the “old park” was closed to these vehicles. The Interior Department, however, stated that ANILCA—either purposely or inadvertently—had opened the area up to snowmachine access. Specifically, Interior Department personnel closely examined Section 1110(a) of the Act and interpreted the clause to mean that “the use of snowmachines ... for traditional activities ... on conservation units” applied not only to newly-acquired parklands but to pre-1980 parklands as well. Recognizing that Section 1330(e) allowed for “permanent closures or restrictions” on parklands after going through a public process, the department that month issued a proposed rule that was “intended to prohibit uses which will be detrimental to the resources” in “sensitive areas” at Denali. Four specific closures were involved: a ten-mile-wide corridor along the length of the park road, two areas that contained “the majority of the park's dwindling caribou herd and wolf population,” a two-mile-wide corridor in the Sable Pass area (where foot traffic would be prohibited away from the road), and several “prime denning areas for the dwindling wolf population,” which would be closed to all human access between mid-April and late September. The proposed actions would close 36 percent of the “old park” to airplane landings, snowmachines, three-wheelers and other motorized craft.¹⁰³

Between April 10 and April 21, 15 public hearings were held on the proposed regulation; three of

these meetings (in Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Healy) specifically related to the Denali proposal. At those meetings, conservationists remarked that they had been taken aback by the proposal. This was not because the Department was offering to close these areas, but because they had assumed all along—and a broad variety of interest groups had long recognized—that all of the “old park” was closed to snowmobiles and other modes of off-road vehicle traffic, just as it had been before ANILCA's passage. The Alaska Congressional delegation protested just as vociferously as conservationists, but for entirely different reasons. In a letter to Interior Secretary James Watt, they stated that “Congress knew what it was doing when it opened Katmai, Glacier Bay, and Denali (formerly McKinley National Park) to motorized access.” After noting that the 1981 NPS regulations allowed closures only when motorized use would be detrimental to an area's resource values, the delegation argued that the agency had not shown sufficient cause for closing these areas. Murkowski, in a press release, further noted that “these new regulations would ... keep all but the heartiest hikers out of some of the most beautiful remote areas in Denali and Katmai National Parks. The blanket closure of these large areas appears unwarranted.”¹⁰⁴

The NPS had originally announced that public comments would be accepted for 60 days, until June 6. But “in response to a number of requests for additional time,” the comment period was extended until August 6. In addition, the agency scheduled another round of seven public meetings, held between July 6 and July 28. After the public comment period closed, however, NPS officials held off on issuing a final rule.¹⁰⁵ Because that rule was never issued in final form, the “old park” remained open to snowmachines. By this time, the general management planning process for each of the new and expanded park areas was well underway, and that process afforded a new opportunity, via the various park GMPs that were being prepared, to shed new light on the motorized-access issue.

Denali's final General Management Plan, issued in late 1986, stated that Executive Order 11644, which President Nixon had signed in February 1972, applied to all off-road vehicles (including snowmachines) that operated on the public lands. More specifically, Section 3 of that order required that park managers needed to specify any areas in the national park system areas that would be opened up to ORV uses, and to do so, they needed to justify that ORV use in these areas would not adversely affect the park's natural, aesthetic, or scenic values. The order, furthermore, specifically prohibited ORV routes in

designated wilderness areas. The plan also stated that “Section 110(a) of ANILCA provides for the use of snowmachines.” (And unlike verbiage in other GMPs written during this period, the Denali GMP made no recommendation to limit either snowmachines or other ORVs to specifically designated routes.) But recreational snowmachining, to be legal, had to have been a traditional activity (as noted in Section 110(a)), and inasmuch as snowmachines had never been commonly used, these vehicles were therefore closed from the Old Park. But because neither the executive order nor the GMP was backed up by specific regulations, the document’s recommendations were unenforceable.¹⁰⁶

Between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s, snowmachine access into the “old park” remained a minor issue. Park staff recognized that no federal regulations prevented snowmachine riders (for recreational purposes) from entering the “old park.” But few snowmachine riders from Anchorage, Fairbanks, or other communities showed much interest in gaining access. The “old park,” therefore, witnessed little snowmachine usage during this period.¹⁰⁷

Working with Park Neighbors

Prior to the 1970s, as noted in Chapters 6 and 7, park staff at Mount McKinley lived and worked in

relative isolation from the outside world. The early 1970s, to be sure, saw some loosening of this isolation with the completion of the Parks Highway. By the end of the decade (see Chapter 8), commercial developments were beginning to spring up along the mile-long strip just north of the Nenana River’s third crossing bridge (at Mile 238) as well as in the long road corridor between Cantwell and the second crossing bridge (at Mile 231). The number of nearby residents was still small; several of these residents, moreover, were present and former NPS employees. There were relatively few instances in which NPS employees interacted (or felt the need to interact) with residents of Cantwell, Healy, and other nearby communities. Public meetings and smaller informal gatherings related to the proposed Alaska lands bill provided some opportunities for local residents to speak with NPS officials, and on a more informal level, NPS employees with school-aged children spent time at Healy’s Tri-Valley School.¹⁰⁸ The 1980s, however, was a different story, and NPS staff found numerous opportunities to work and partner with its neighbors. The primary matters of mutual interest between the park and its neighbors concerned the Alaska Railroad and its ownership transfer; the formation of the Denali Borough; the proposed Healy “clean coal” plant; the establishment of the Denali Foundation; and the establishment and maintenance of a local medical presence.

Tom Habecker Collection
The Alaska Railroad crosses Riley
Creek just south of the McKinley
Station Depot. Tom Habecker
Collection



During the early to mid-1980s, the National Park Service worked with the State of Alaska officials as part of a process that culminated in the Alaska Railroad's transfer from the federal to the state governments. The Alaska Railroad, of course, had played an integral role in providing access to the park ever since the early 1920s, and until the early 1950s the railroad had also played a key role in park development projects, including the management of both the park hotel and the tour bus operation. The railroad had been an Interior Department entity until 1967, when it was transferred to the Federal Railroad Administration within the new Department of Transportation.

Throughout this period, the railroad was responsible for bringing a large majority of visitors to the park; as noted above, the railroad had been virtually the only way to access the park until the Denali Highway was opened in 1957, and this long-distance dirt road was the only non-rail link to the park until the fall of 1971, when the Parks Highway was opened. Although the completion of this highway considerably eased access to the park for residents of Anchorage, Fairbanks, and other railbelt communities, a considerable number of park visitors—many of them on package tours—continued to reach the park by rail during the 1970s and early 1980s. But despite the railroad's increasing popularity with Outside visitors, the line had a consistently negative cash flow.

During this same period, Congress began to re-examine the paternal relations that it had long kept with the nation's various transportation modes. Until the mid-1970s, the Federal government had closely regulated the airline, trucking, and railroad industries; it had a strong role in transportation mergers, rates, line abandonments, and related matters. But encouraged in large part by the crisis that the U.S. railroads endured beginning in the late 1960s, Congress passed a series of acts that played a major role in deregulating the principal transportation industries. These efforts included the Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act of 1976, the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978, the Staggers Rail Act of 1980, and the Motor Carrier Act of 1980.

These bills had their effect on Alaska as well. Congress, in 1980, had tacked a provision onto Title VII of the Staggers Rail Act asking the Interstate Commerce Commission to investigate whether the Alaska Railroad's rate structure was out of line. The following July, after the dust from ANILCA had finally settled, Alaska's Congressional delegation made a bold move: it introduced bills "directing the Secretary [of Transportation] to transfer the Alaska Railroad

to the State of Alaska before October 1, 1982." Such an action was logical given the prevailing deregulatory climate, the Alaska Railroad's public ownership, its poor economic performance, and the state's excellent financial position in the wake of the Alaska Pipeline.

The various bills submitted in 1981 enjoyed varying degrees of success. Rep. Don Young's bill (H.R. 4278) made little headway, but the language in his bill was soon incorporated into a larger bill (H.R. 6308) related to Amtrak issues in the Northeast Corridor. That bill passed the House but bogged down in the Senate. Alaska's senior senator, Ted Stevens, had better luck with his bill, S. 1500. Just a month after he introduced it, Stevens's bill received a two-day hearing in the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. After ten months of behind-the-scenes work, the bill was "ordered to be reported with an amendment in the nature of a substitute favorably," and in late June 1982 Robert Packwood (R-Ore.), the Committee chair, brought it up to the full Senate. On December 21, in the last days of the 97th Congress, Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio)—who had previously had some strong disagreements with Stevens regarding various aspects of S. 1500, agreed to submit a new bill (which, like Young's bill, dealt primarily with Northeast Corridor rail operations) that incorporated most of Stevens's bill. That bill, in turn, was folded into an even larger bill dealing with pipeline safety.¹⁰⁰ In one dizzying day, this bill was introduced, it passed the Senate, and the House agreed to the newly-passed Senate substitute. The new bill was then forwarded on to President Ronald Reagan, who signed the bill on January 14, 1983. What had been previously known as the "Alaska Railroad Transfer Act of 1982" became Title VI of the pipeline safety act.¹⁰¹

The new law provided for a transition period during which the U.S. Secretary of Transportation and the Alaska Governor would prepare, and jointly present to Congress, a report on all railroad properties that were subject to transfer. That report, by Secretary Elizabeth Dole and Governor Bill Sheffield, was completed and signed on July 15, 1983. The following May, the Alaska legislature passed a bill (SB 10) authorizing Sheffield to negotiate with the federal government about the transfer, and two months later, Sheffield established the Alaska Railroad Corporation. Having met all requirements pursuant to Congress's January 1983 act, the Alaska Railroad was transferred from the federal to the state government on January 5, 1985.¹⁰²

This act had two specific park-related provisions. Section 604(b)(1)(d), combined with Section 612

The Alaska Railroad has been bringing visitors to the park since 1922. NPS Interp. Collection, #479, Denali National Park and Preserve



noted that the railroad right-of-way would “be transferred to the Secretary of the Interior for administration as part of the Denali National Park and Preserve.” The state, however, would be able to use, without compensation, lands along the railroad right-of-way within the park’s boundary necessary for its tracks, terminal, and other existing facilities. This use, however, was subject to federal laws and regulations that protected park resources. In addition, Section 604(c)(3) of the bill recognized that the NPS would be able to continue its use of railroad land at Talkeetna for park administrative purposes (see Chapter 13). The agency had been leasing a 50’ x 100’ parcel near the railroad depot since April 1980 (and had been paying the railroad \$600 per year for the privilege), but language in the transfer act allowed the NPS to use and occupy the parcel without compensation.¹²²

Not long after the railroad issue was resolved, the park and its neighbors pondered a new issue: whether a new borough should be established in the area. In the spring of 1987, Matanuska-Susitna Borough Manager John Hale first suggested changing the borough’s name to Denali and extending its boundaries north to include Mount McKinley. A year later, however, officials in Nenana asked the state to study a different plan, one that would create a new borough extending south from Nenana to Mat-Su’s northern boundary and thus include Mount McKinley and most of the park unit. The Nenana officials’ proposal was formulated by a desire to unite Nenana, Cantwell, and Anderson on issues before the state government; in addition, it was a defensive

action intended to prevent Mat-Su borough from extending too far north. Later in 1988, Hale revived his proposal, and borough assemblymen backed him to some degree; one, Ted Smith, dryly noted that the present name was “certainly descriptive, but it doesn’t actually inspire the imagination.” Mat-Su planners who had studied the matter concluded that it would probably raise more money than it would cost; Nenana officials countered that they hoped to keep the area’s tax base within their orbit.¹²³

In January 1989, Mat-Su upped the ante when the borough assembly passed a resolution asking that the state drop its Nenana study until Mat-Su could complete its own. That, however, brought forth a protest from residents of Healy and surrounding areas (including some NPS staff), who on September 7 filed for the creation of a new Denali Borough based in Healy. And in October of that year, a Nenana-based group filed a new proposal for a “Valley Borough” that would encompass most of the territory between Mat-Su and the Fairbanks North Star boroughs. As a result of these actions, the state’s Department of Community and Regional Affairs (DCRA) had to consider three petitions for the McKinley-Railbelt region: a Mat-Su extension proposal and proposals for new boroughs based in either Healy or Nenana. As one Healy meeting attendee frankly admitted, “I think everybody sitting at this table would just as soon have no government.” Another, however, recognized that “we’re all here because Mat-Su is trying to annex this area ... our mission here is to block that an-

nexation so that they don't draw revenue from our area and take our local control."¹²⁴

On December 30, 1989, DCRA weighed in with its decision. In a draft report, it decided in favor of Healy's proposal, thus rejecting plans from both Nenana and Mat-Su. That proposal, it noted, made good economic sense. But while the Department's report rejected the Nenana-based proposal, the report ironically noted that DCRA would welcome the addition of the Nenana area to the Healy-based proposal—assuming, of course, that Nenana residents backed the idea.¹²⁵

The Denali Borough, with Healy as its seat of government, was established on December 7, 1990. Its boundaries included more than two-thirds of Denali National Park and Preserve and comprised six main population clusters: Anderson/Clear, Ferry, Lignite, Healy, Denali National Park/McKinley Village, and Cantwell. Its year-round population that year, according to U.S. Census figures, was 1,441, and more than half of that population was located within five miles of the park boundary. The borough, moreover, decided that its primary revenue source—at least in its early years—would be a tax on overnight accommodations; thus revenues generated by park visitors played a major role in financing borough operations.¹²⁶

The NPS also worked with park neighbors on the long running Healy "clean coal" power plant proposal. Coal had been mined at Suntrana since the early 1920s, and since 1943 the Usibelli Coal Mine had been active; both mines were located along Healy Creek east of Healy. Coal mining remained active in the Healy area for the next several decades, and in 1967 the Golden Valley Electric Association (the Fairbanks area's primary electric utility) opened a 25 megawatt power plant adjacent to the Usibelli mine.¹²⁷

In 1989, a potential new source for electric power loomed in the region when several entities—the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA), Golden Valley Electric Association (GVEA), Usibelli Coal Mine, and others—submitted an application to the U.S. Department of Energy to fund a 50 megawatt power plant at Healy under the federal Clean Coal Technology program. (Officials pitched the idea that a Healy plant could "demonstrate how to burn coal for energy without spewing out the pollutants most responsible for acid rain: sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides.") Later that year, the DOE selected the so-called Healy Clean Coal Project for federal funding.¹²⁸ Plans called for the construction of a \$161-million-plus plant (\$93 million of it from DOE), to be completed in 1995.¹²⁹

Problems, however, dogged the project from its earliest days. Project proponents spoke of diversifying the Railbelt's energy base, attaining energy independence for Interior Alaska, and benefiting economically from plant construction activity. But opponents—of which there were many—claimed that the project was economically absurd because it would force Interior residents to pay high electrical rates at a time when low-cost electricity was plentifully available. The project also pitted utility against utility and natural gas producers against Usibelli Mine; in addition, according to one account, it became "another front in the seemingly endless war between Anchorage and Fairbanks over regional dominance."¹³⁰ In addition, financing became a problem; by early 1991, the project tab had risen to \$193 million, and non-federal sources were unable to raise \$35 million in necessary project funding. Although Congress approved project funding that April, an Anchorage newspaper editorial noted that the financing package was "a dubious deal at best" and "a case of federal pork-grubbing gone awry."¹³¹

By the end of 1991, the plant's price tag had risen to \$198.5 million and its estimated completion date had been pushed back to 1996, and just three months later the "roughly \$200 million" project had an estimated 1997 start date. The project was now pitting Chugach Electric Association (in Anchorage) against GVEA (in Fairbanks); in addition, environmental groups were lining up against the plant because any coal plant in that area threatened the park's air and water.¹³² Despite all that opposition, the Alaska Public Utilities Commission approved a key marketing contract (between the plant and GVEA) in September 1992.¹³³

Next to weigh in on the project were National Park Service officials who shared environmentalists' concerns—specifically, that emissions from the plant would threaten the region's pristine air quality. They noted that park visitors would have their scenic views tainted by the plant's smoke plume, and in February 1993, the Interior Department issued a notice that emissions from the proposed power plan would have an adverse impact on the park's air quality. Because of additional concerns with the park's "terrestrial and aquatic resources," it recommended that the plant's air quality permit be denied.¹³⁴ Project sponsors, upon receiving that recommendation, worked with Interior Department officials to meet their concerns. They promised to reduce emissions on their existing Healy power plant to such a degree that, when the new plant was up and running, the total emissions from both plants would be close to then-current levels. Based on those assurances, the federal government, state

In 1993 the first Intergenerational Elderhostel group was hosted at the Denali Foundation campus. Elderhostel Collection, Denali Education Center



government, and GVEA signed a Memorandum of Agreement to that effect on November 9, 1993, and the following March, Energy Department officials agreed to spend about \$110 million to fulfill their role in constructing the \$227 million plant.¹⁵⁵ By this time, Trustees for Alaska (a group of lawyers advocating for environmental protection) had challenged the project in the Alaska Supreme Court. But in June 1994, Trustees reached an out-of-court settlement with project developers that allowed plant construction to proceed, and in May 1995 construction on the \$267 million generating plant finally got underway.¹⁵⁶ Details of plant operations are noted in Chapter 10.

Yet another way in which NPS officials interacted with its park neighbors was in the establishment of the Denali Foundation. As noted in Chapter 8, residents in areas surrounding the park—and some in areas as far away as Anchorage and Fairbanks—had banded together in April 1974 to establish the Denali Citizens Council. That group, which was “honestly concerned and interested in protecting the unique values of McKinley Park and region surrounding it,” has remained active to the present day. During the late 1980s, however, it was felt that a new organization was necessary: one more related to interpretation and education rather than specific lobbying activities, and one that appealed to Outsiders as well as Railbelt residents. That new organization, the Denali Foundation, was incorporated in November 1989, largely through the efforts of

park superintendent Robert C. Cunningham and longtime concessioner George Fleharty. These two men had been working together for nine years and had an excellent working relationship; the Foundation, to some extent, was a logical extension of Fleharty’s interest in expanding the park’s Elderhostel program,¹⁵⁷ combined with Cunningham’s interest in having a home-away-from-home for scientists conducting research in the park.

The self-stated purpose of the Denali Foundation was “to develop and implement research, education and communication programs that benefit the Denali Park region, the state of Alaska, and our planet. We believe that wilderness provides an educational opportunity to teach and to share values common to all of us.” Cunningham also hoped, through this program, to develop a group of park defenders. As he noted in a recent book, “I was looking for allies to support regulations that would prevent the degradation of Denali National Park.” Thus after Fleharty approached him with the Elderhostel concept, “I immediately supported George’s idea because I saw the opportunity to possibly recruit supporters from around the world to be an environmental voice for the park.”¹⁵⁸ Fleharty also provided the new organization a long-term home; as part of ARA’s 1987 purchase of the 27-acre McKinley Village property from Linda Crabb, he reserved 10 acres of that parcel for the Denali Foundation, as well as housing for ARA employees.¹⁵⁹

Since its founding, the Denali Foundation has established a broad network of programs designed for all ages. Elderhostel programs at the park, which had begun in 1984, were incorporated into the Foundation beginning in 1990. That same year, a new Elderhostel campus was erected at McKinley Village. And a third major aspect of the Foundation's program—communicating the results of scientific research to the public—has resulted in a lecture program that brings scores of scientists to the lectern each summer for lectures, films, cultural demonstrations, and other presentations. The Foundation also offers programs tailored to meet the needs of local residents, both children and adults, and it also sponsors various wilderness education programs. Since 1992, this organization has partnered with the NPS via a cooperative agreement, but no government funds are specifically allotted to fund Denali Foundation activities.¹⁴⁰ During the winter of 2006-2007, the Denali Foundation changed its name to the Denali Education Center in order to more appropriately state its emphasis on educational programming.¹⁴¹

Finally, the NPS worked with park neighbors to establish a medical facility in the park vicinity. During the 1970s, park rangers and other local employees (both NPS and concessions staff) were trained in first aid and rescue techniques; in addition, the concessioner supported a registered nurse, who worked out of the park hotel. Otherwise, the nearest medical specialist was a physician's assistant (PA) located in Healy, some 12 miles north of the park hotel. (The Tri-Valley Community Center was completed in the late 1970s, and John Winkleman, the local PA, had his office in that building.) But given the explosion in annual park visitation during the 1970s

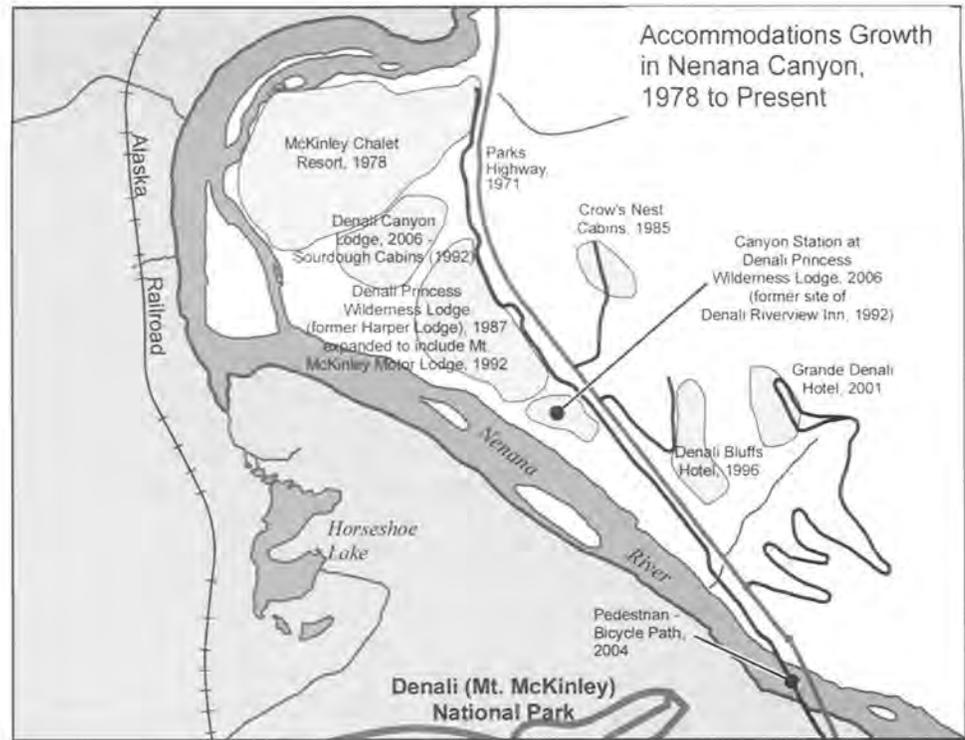
and early 1980s, both NPS officials and the park concessioner became acutely aware that a more sophisticated medical presence was necessary. So when a retired thoracic surgeon from New Mexico arrived at the park in the spring of 1985, the park community welcomed his presence; he spent the summer providing volunteer emergency medical services to park visitors and employees. The physician returned the following year to perform the same services.¹⁴² And in 1987, the NPS established agreements with the Tri-Valley Fire Department so that the hotel and headquarters areas would have better fire and emergency medical service protection.¹⁴³ These services became increasingly sophisticated in later years. Most medical services pertained to minor diseases, physical ailments, disease prevention, and accident responses.¹⁴⁴

Shuttle Bus Capacity Issues

As noted in Chapter 8, the mile-long stretch of the Parks Highway just north of its intersection with the park road witnessed the first inklings of commercial development soon after the highway was completed in the early 1970s. For the next several years, only a few scattered residences were seen. But in the spring of 1978, Outdoor World Ltd. opened the first unit of the McKinley Chalets, and by the end of 1980, the NPS noted that "three new hotel units were utilized, and construction on a gift shop, lobby, restaurant, and lounge" was underway at the hotel. These improvements soon spawned ancillary developments, and by 1983 the park superintendent stated that "a major tourist industry is springing up." Soon after the hotel was completed, "numerous small businesses mushroomed around the area: taco stands, horse rides, two campgrounds, two other 24-unit motels, and a liquor store. ... All



The Denali Foundation's 90-seat lecture hall and offices, completed in 1998 with over 4,000 hours of volunteer effort, are located in the Charles Sheldon Center, named in honor of the founder of Denali National Park. Denali Education Center Collection



Map 2. Accommodations Growth in Nenana Canyon, 1978 to Present.

these additional tourist facilities,” he added, “will have an increased impact on the park road corridor.” (See Map 2.) The mid-1980s brought new businesses to the mile-long strip, locally called Healy Canyon, Nenana Canyon, or simply “the canyon;” the 1985 construction of a series of tourist cabins on the slopes of Sugar Loaf Mountain increased the width of the commercial corridor and portended future developments upslope from the Parks Highway.¹⁴⁷

In late 1986, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the NPS completed a general management plan for the park. A key aspect of that plan was a proposal to allow an increased use of bus traffic—up to 20 percent higher than had been recorded in 1984—while simultaneously cutting back on private vehicle traffic. The agency planned a sequential three-step approach to implementing its road-corridor traffic plan, and although the plan did not give a specific time horizon, NPS officials generally agreed that five years or more would be needed for its full implementation. In 1986, however, two major events took place: ARA (the successor to Outdoor World) added 36 rooms to the McKinley Chalets, and Princess Tours began to construct the 154-bed Harper Lodge, which was slated for completion in the spring of 1987.¹⁴⁸

The construction of this lodge promised to put further pressure on the bus traffic over the park road. In response, therefore, park officials decided to immediately implement the first stage of the GMP’s traffic plan. As a result, park officials in 1987 added 15 percent more capacity

to the combined tour bus and shuttle bus fleets, but they also imposed severe reductions on park road traffic by agency and concessions employees, Kantishna lodge owners and claim holders, and professional photographers. By severely rationalizing long-established access and offering prudent alternatives, the agency was able to generally meet the traffic targets that the GMP had outlined.¹⁴⁷

Despite the fact that the traffic plan allowed for substantial growth in bus capacity, the increased numbers were still insufficient to meet peak season needs, and some park visitors were inconvenienced. In 1985, the first year in which the agency adhered to its bus-capacity limits, a few mid-season visitors were turned away. The following year, according to a government report, “approximately 1,500 visitors were unable to obtain shuttle bus seats on the day they arrived,” and “long lines at early hours were commonplace.” (Some of these visitors were particularly chagrined at the lack of bus capacity, inasmuch as they had obtained campground reservations via a newly-installed Ticketron system but were unable to access their campsites.) Long lines continued until 1988, when the park instituted a shuttle bus reservation system that offered a 24-hour lead time for reservations.¹⁴⁸

For the remainder of the decade, the agency did its best to meet the GMP’s traffic goals. Pressures on the road, however, built ever greater. By 1988, Denali recreational visitation—at 592,431—reached its greatest total ever. A year later, the



Tom Habecker Collection
The new Kantishna Roadhouse lodge building is located in the area of the gold rush town site of Eureka, now called Kantishna. Tom Habecker Collection

park superintendent remarked that “local hotels continued to build additional rooms,” and he further remarked that the boom in “wholesale tourism development on the eastern boundary” continued into the early 1990s.¹⁴⁹ Tourism growth was also taking place in the Kantishna area. Beginning about 1983, Roberta Wilson first brought tourists to her Kantishna Roadhouse property,¹⁵⁰ and in the late 1980s the new North Face Lodge owners made substantial renovations to their property.¹⁵¹ Another new hostelry, opened in 1989, was the Denali Mountain Lodge, located near the Kantishna Airstrip.¹⁵² During this period, the capacity of all of these hostelries remained relatively modest; even so, sustaining those operations put additional strains on the park road’s capacity.

Park officials, trying to remain under the capacity limits, continued to limit private vehicle traffic according to methods inaugurated in 1987. But they also did what they could to implement stages 2 and 3 of the GMP’s traffic plan. Specifically, they allowed additional passengers (though not additional buses) by allowing both the concessioner and the shuttle-bus operator to use larger-sized buses.¹⁵³ In the summer of 1988, regional-office wildlife biologist Dale Taylor began the first phase of a four-year study that, like the previous Tracy-Dean and Singer-Beattie studies, monitored the impact of road traffic on the park’s wildlife.¹⁵⁴

Beginning in 1989, the superintendent began a public process that gradually phased out motorized access to most of the park campgrounds located west of Savage River. The first step in this

process took place in the summer of 1989, when the Wonder Lake Campground was relocated from the knoll top to areas nearer the lake; because of ongoing construction, the agency closed the campground to all visitors. The following year, NPS provided ten additional Wonder Lake campsites; this larger facility, however, remained closed to motorized camping. In January 1990, the agency announced additional closures; at a series of public meetings, the agency said that it would close Teklanika and Sanctuary campgrounds to motorists as “part of a long-term plan to reduce vehicle traffic because of its effect on Denali’s renowned wildlife.” Superintendent Berry noted that these actions were a logical follow-up to recommendations made in the 1986 GMP. The agency’s plans, predictably, aroused scattered public grumbling; perhaps as a result of those protests, campers retained their ability to drive to Teklanika Campground, though they would now be limited to a 3-day minimum stay. Starting in 1990, all park campgrounds west of Savage River were closed to drive-in camping.¹⁵⁵

The NPS, during this period, effectively served as a community center for local residents, whether park employees or not. As noted in Chapter 7, a six-unit apartment building had been built at headquarters in 1958, and ever since that time, the recreation room in that building had served as an informal meeting room and social center. Seasonal parties, dances, movie nights, and other community social events were held there until 1983, when work began on the state-sponsored McKinley Village Community Center, located between McKinley Village and the Denali (Lingo) Airstrip. (The center opened

The Denali Fruit Express, privately owned and operated by Denise Taylor (pictured on the right), brought fresh produce, baked goods, coffee and good cheer to the park vicinity every week during the summer season. Denise Taylor Collection



in 1984.) NPS employees also played key roles in organizing and supporting various other community events, including the Pygmy Tundra Buffalo Run (a half-marathon race begun in the mid-1970s), the Panguingue Creek Co-op (for bulk foods), and the “Denali Fruit Express” (which since 1981 has brought perishable foods to the area from Anchorage and the Palmer area on a regularly-scheduled basis).¹⁵⁶

A final way in which the NPS responded to the ever-greater demands for park-road visitation was to work with the concessioner on a new tour, one that would go no farther than Primrose Ridge. The idea was conceived, developed and approved during the mid-1980s, but not implemented until 1990.¹⁵⁷ Park management assistant Ralph Tingey, who helped develop the tour, reasoned that many park visitors had little interest in a long bus ride; they did, however, want a clear view of Mount McKinley. The Savage River check station (which at that time was just west of Savage River Campground) offered such a view; this location, however, did not have a spot where buses could turn around. Primrose Ridge, located 1.2 miles beyond the Savage River bridge, offered both a turnaround loop and a panoramic Mount McKinley vista. This site, moreover, was just 3.2 miles beyond Savage River Bridge, where the check station was sited beginning in 1990. NPS officials felt that a 3.2-mile segment was sufficiently short that bus trips terminating at Primrose Ridge should not impact the park road’s bus capacity ceiling. This “Natural History Tour” initially had few patrons,

but by the mid-1990s it was carrying almost as many visitors as the Tundra Wildlife Tour and the shuttle bus.¹⁵⁸

In addition to capacity pressures, cost pressures were also a growing bus-system problem. As noted in Chapter 8, the shuttle buses beginning in 1972 had been run by the concessioner on a “cost plus” contract. A year later the NPS, hoping to guarantee greater reliability than the concessioner had thus far provided, made the first of several attempts to purchase its own fleet of shuttle buses. In 1975, however, the General Services Administration flatly rejected that request.¹⁵⁹ Due to ballooning costs—brought on by a lack of incentive to restrain expenses—the agency in 1982 implemented a year-to-year contract system, and since then several different companies had supplied the park with its shuttle bus fleet. But the explosion in visitation during the 1980s resulted in ever-higher costs to the bus contractor.¹⁶⁰ In 1991 these costs became a critical park issue because the park budget provided \$1.3 million for the shuttle bus contract, but the lowest bid submitted to fulfill that contract totaled \$1.8 million. The superintendent reluctantly accepted that bid. He noted, in his year-end report, that the terms of the contract were fulfilled “through careful accumulation of lapse monies and assistance from the region.”¹⁶¹ NPS officials recognized that the bus contract’s fiscal arrangements were untenable and needed to be changed.

Park officials, looking for a way out of its fiscal crisis, recognized that the Concessions Policy Act

The Denali Natural History Tour destination at Primrose Pullout provides a panoramic view of the Alaska Range, as seen in this 1998 photo. Courtesy of Doyon/ARAMARK Joint Venture



of 1965 demanded that the NPS, each five years, needed to reconsider the concessioner's franchise fees.¹⁶² Given that law, the NPS in 1992 began discussions with ARA Leisure Services, Inc. regarding a renegotiation of its franchise fee. A key aspect of those negotiations was to allow the concessioner to operate the shuttle-bus system. This arrangement, as noted above, had been in place between 1972 (when the shuttle bus system was inaugurated) and 1981. What made the new proposal substantially different, however, was that the concessioner would assume total control of the shuttle-bus operation; it would purchase its own fleet of shuttle buses, hire its own drivers, and charge visitors a break-even rate for shuttle bus use. It would also require the concessioner to invest in new employee housing and to install new bus maintenance facilities. The amendment was advantageous to the NPS in two key ways; it resulted in a sharp spike in the franchise fee that concessioner paid to the government—from 0.75 percent up to 12 percent—and it also allowed the NPS to divert its annual \$1.1 million bus system expenses to other park-related purposes. To the park visitor, the proposed amendment to the 1981 concessions contract promised newer buses and thus a more comfortable ride down the park road; the cost of that ride, however, would swell from the current \$4 entrance fee (regardless of length) to a more expensive trip, with costs dependent on distance: passengers bound for Eielson would be charged \$20, for example, while Wonder Lake passengers would pay \$30.¹⁶³

Both parties hoped that the contract amendment could be signed and implemented in time for

the 1994 season. But by early 1994, negotiations were stalled. Talks took a new turn, however, when ARA representatives proposed operating a reservation system for both the shuttle bus and the park campgrounds. NPS representatives were amenable to this proposal, and on June 3, 1994, agency director Roger Kennedy signed the contract amendment.¹⁶⁴

When news of this contract was made public, various interest groups protested "almost every aspect of the contract," according to one news item. The NPS, critics noted, rushed to close the deal before conducting necessary safety and environmental studies, and some were irked that the financial details were being kept confidential, leading some to believe that the NPS was being shortchanged. Another annoyed group was the Denali Task Force, an NPS Advisory Board group that Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt had selected, because the contract amendment was finalized without their knowledge or input.¹⁶⁵ NPS Regional Director Jack Morehead, in response to the criticism, agreed to prepare an environmental assessment (EA) on the proposed new concessioner facilities, and Morehead's successor, Bob Barbee, agreed to begin work on yet another management plan for the 90-mile-long road corridor. (This latter plan is detailed in Chapter 10.) On September 1, the Department authorized ARA to purchase sufficient buses to operate the system. Two months later, the NPS completed and distributed its concessioner facilities EA, and in the spring of 1995, Aramark (the concessioner's new name) began operating the new shuttle bus system.¹⁶⁶ The bus fleet was comprised of 25

blue-green “Blue Bird” 48-passenger buses for trips as far west as Eielson Visitor Center; for points farther west, however, yellow-colored 40-passenger buses were on hand. A shuttle-bus trip from the entrance area to Eielson cost \$20, while a Wonder Lake trip cost \$26.¹⁶⁷



Campers traveling to or from campgrounds without private vehicle access, including Sanctuary, Igloo, and Wonder Lake campgrounds, use designated camper shuttle buses for transportation. NPS Photo, Denali National Park and Preserve

A key provision worked out in the concessioner's contract amendment dealt with the long-running issue of bus-system capacity. As noted above, NPS officials had reacted to the capacity limits laid out in the 1986 GMP by closing most of the park's campgrounds to motorized camper traffic, cutting back on road use by concession and NPS staff, and by instituting a new “Natural History Tour” that terminated at Primrose Ridge. Those measures successfully kept road traffic under the GMP's limits. Visitation between 1991 and 1994, moreover, had dropped more than 10 percent, resulting in an easing up of the capacity issue.¹⁶⁸ The concessioner was willing to entertain a major contract modification, with a concomitant investment in buses and support facilities. It was reluctant to take that step, however, without some guarantee that future visitors—whatever their number—would be able to access the park's wonders via the existing park road. So when the contract amendment was announced on June 6, the press release stated that “the improvements to the system include a 40 percent increase in the number of shuttle bus seats,” which was far higher than the GMP allowed. Park superintendent Russell Berry, moreover, justified the new ridership numbers by stating that the road's “stage three” capacity was 38 percent higher than in 1984: not 20 percent higher, as many had

previously concluded.¹⁶⁹ But the barrage of criticism that the NPS faced after the details of the contract amendment were released to the public, plus the Interior Department's decision to embark on yet another park-road management plan, put on hold any immediate plans to abandon capacity limits that were more than 20 percent greater than in 1984. Traffic capacity, meanwhile, ceased being a critical public issue, primarily because visitor volumes remained generally stable for the next several years.

The Visitor Entrance Fee Issue

As noted in Chapter 8, typical park visitors prior to the 1970s paid no fees to the NPS for using the park. Fees were charged only for those taking the concession-sponsored bus tour out the park road, along with the usual charges for the park hotel, coffee shop, and other concession operations. About 1970 the NPS began to charge fees for those staying at the park campgrounds, but two years later, when private vehicle traffic was restricted west of the Savage River campground, no fees were assessed to those who traveled on the park's shuttle bus system. This arrangement continued for the remainder of the decade.

The question of fees arose during the debate that led to ANILCA. In the spring of 1979, the NPS announced its intention to charge a \$5 fee for riding the shuttle bus. Alaskans, however, strongly protested the proposed fee, and after Senator Ted Stevens introduced legislation to prohibit the fee's implementation, the agency withdrew its fee proposal. On October 1, 1979, the Senate considered a House bill on an unrelated matter, and Senator Stevens—sure that the bill would pass—inserted an amendment (Sec. 402) prohibiting the NPS from establishing user fees for bus service, and also barring the NPS from establishing an entrance fee at Mount McKinley National Park. That bill passed the Senate the same day and became law on October 12.¹⁷⁰ That fee prohibition was reiterated in Section 203 of ANILCA, which stated that “notwithstanding any other provision of law, no fees shall be charged for entrance or admission to any unit of the National Park System located in Alaska.”¹⁷¹

The costs of the bus operation, however, brought pressure on the agency to institute a fee. During the summer of 1982, for example, the NPS estimated that each of the 68,774 visitors who rode the free shuttle bus cost the government \$11.32. Perhaps based on pressure from Interior Secretary James Watt, who visited Alaska in August 1983, NPS Regional Director Roger Contor stated that the NPS wanted to see tourists pay \$5 for the bus ride. That proposal was staved off for the

time being, perhaps because of the efforts of Rep. Don Young.¹⁷²

Soon afterward, however, pressure began to develop in Congress to allow a shuttle bus fee by eliminating the operative clause from the Act of October 12, 1979. (ANILCA's Section 203 would remain unaffected, inasmuch as the proposed fee was a ridership fee and not an entrance fee.) By February 1985 the Interior Department—recognizing that \$1.35 million had been budgeted during the current fiscal year to keep the park's shuttle buses going—was proposing the implementation of a shuttle bus fee structure: one day for \$5, three days for \$10, and a season pass for \$20. These fees, it was projected, would generate approximately \$600,000 in annual revenue.¹⁷³ Congress did not take up the issue that year, but the economic pressures continued; in July 1986, for example, a Reagan administration bill proposed new entrance fees at many park units and an increase in entrance fees at other park units.¹⁷⁴

The issue finally came to a head in 1987. Superintendent Cunningham recalls that during the summer congressional recess, Rep. John Kasich (R-Ohio) visited the park, and the two conversed in the park hotel. Cunningham, who was worried that Congress was going to reduce the park's budget, was relieved to hear Kasich mention that the budget would not be cut. What Kasich may not have mentioned, however, was that a congressional plan was in the works to institute a bus fee proposal and that Congress's general-fund allotment to the park would be reduced to the degree that bus revenues would be generated. Shortly after that visit, Rep. William H. Gray (D-Pa.) introduced a massive budget bill (H.R. 3523). The bill passed the House on October 29. At some point between then and December 11 (when the Senate passed the bill), an amendment was added that authorized the Interior Secretary to charge an admission fee at Denali National Park. The bill was signed by President Reagan and became law on December 22, 1987.¹⁷⁵

Park staff, in observance of the new law, began collecting fees from everyone who continued west of the Savage River check station. Beginning in 1988 a \$3 fee was charged to all adults aged 17 or more; those on the shuttle buses paid when they boarded at the Riley Creek information center, while the concessioner collected the fee as part of the Tundra Wildlife Tour ticket price. By 1991, these entrance fees brought in \$500,000 to government coffers, and by 1993 "record amounts of fees were collected and remitted." In 1993, shuttle bus tickets still cost just \$3 per person.¹⁷⁶

Shoulder Season Traffic and the Lottery System

Visitation to Alaska's Railbelt has long been highly seasonal. In keeping with that pattern, rail-borne visitation to Mount McKinley has long been concentrated in an 11- or 12-week summer season. Automobile traffic along the park road, which eased park access to Railbelt residents beginning in the late 1950s, followed a similar pattern. A few brave residents came as early as April, and a few as late as October, but the vast majority of tourists (particularly those from outside of Alaska) arrived between late May and early September. As was noted in Chapter 8, NPS officials in 1972 announced that their new shuttle bus system would operate from June 1 until September 10, and in later years the bus season moved to a Memorial-Day-weekend-to-mid-September schedule.

For automobile tourists who arrived in the springtime, they could drive as far as the Toklat River (if open that far) until shuttle buses began their scheduled service. In a similar way, late-season tourists were free to use the park road until the snow rendered the road impassable. Inasmuch as NPS maintenance crews typically began their efforts in March or early April, springtime tourists—if they were lucky—could drive on the park road for a month or more prior to Memorial Day; and during the fall, tourists typically had between a month and six weeks to use the park road. To encourage local visitation to the park, Alaskan newspapers during the 1970s often published mid-May articles inviting locals to avoid the "summer hordes of tourists," and in mid-September there were travel pieces describing the "perfect weather" along the park road.¹⁷⁷ As a practical matter, however, few people spent much time driving the park road during either the spring or fall months. This was because the park hotel—the only major accommodation in the area—was not open during most of the shoulder season. The park campgrounds, moreover, were either snowbound or they were simply cold, damp, and uncomfortable.

This pattern—of an open road and an open invitation to visit—remained during the first half of the 1980s.¹⁷⁸ But by 1986, the specter of overcrowding had descended on the shoulder season's tranquility. That year, the agency opened the entire length of the road to general traffic on Monday, September 8.¹⁷⁹ Beginning that day, about 250 cars a day trundled over the road. (This number was far greater than the number of vehicles that typically traveled over the park road during mid-season; NPS officials noted that on a peak day in July, the number of buses, work vehicles, ranger patrols and private cars "might get as high as 150.")¹⁸⁰ Then, on Saturday, September 13, some 500 cars

During the 1980s, the park road stayed open for private traffic from Labor Day weekend (when the shuttle bus system ended for the season) until winter snows closed it. The increasing popularity of the park during the late 1980s resulted in bumper-to-bumper traffic congestion. NPS Interp. Collection, #4374, Denali National Park and Preserve



headed west from Savage River, creating bumper-to-bumper traffic, frayed nerves, and at least one fender-bender. Hoping to avoid a repeat of those difficulties, the NPS in 1987 waited until Monday, September 14 to open the road; as a result, officials happily noted that “we did not witness the usual influx ... with dust clouds, wildlife/people conflicts, etc.”¹⁸⁰ The following year, officials limited the fall road opening to just three days, and in 1989 it was open for just two days: Saturday and Sunday, September 16 and 17. (In both of those years, the road remained open after the designated “open” period, but only as far west as the Toklat Rest Area at Mile 53; a week after that, the road was closed west of the Teklanika Rest Area at Mile 30.) Rangers, asked to explain the new restrictions, stated that they were attempting to shift road use more toward a “mass transit” system in order to increase wildlife habitat, and thus wildlife sightings.¹⁸²

The two-day road opening in September 1989, as it turned out, was exceedingly popular; on Saturday the 16th, almost 1,500 vehicles headed down the park road. Based on that severe overcrowding, park officials moved to eliminate the September overcrowding by instituting a lottery system. That plan, which was announced in May 1990 and open for public comment until June 8, resulted in a light and variable response; of 34 responses, slightly over half were in favor of the plan. Russell Berry, the park’s new superintendent, felt that the lottery was a good, fair system, so in mid-June the NPS announced its implementation, at least for the fall of 1990. In late July, anyone interested in driving the park road during a four-day period – Friday, September 14 through

Monday, September 17—was asked to send the NPS a postcard expressing their interest. On August 10, Superintendent Berry sent letters to the winning entrants. Eighty percent of the 1,500 entrants were awarded the opportunity to drive the road: 300 people on each of the four days. The fall road opening took place as scheduled, during which time all cars without successful lottery entries were stopped at the Savage check station. In the spring of 1990, this station had been moved two miles west—from just beyond the Savage River campground to the far side of the Savage River bridge—as part of a road paving project. It has remained at its new site ever since.¹⁸³

The opening was so successful, both to participants and the park’s wildlife, that the agency decided to continue the lottery in future years. Beginning in 1991, those interested in driving the road were given the entire month of July to send entries to the park showing their dates of interest, and during early August the agency selected and notified the winning entries. The only major change that took place during the next several years was that the number of awarded permits (1,200) stayed constant, while the number of interested applicants steadily increased. The only other variable was the weather. NPS officials reserved the right to close the road at any time due to early-season snow, and in 1992, a major snowstorm hit just before the first day of the September road opening. As a result, the road was closed to all vehicles midway through the second road-opening day, and 58 people who had driven all the way to Kantishna were stranded for several days until crews could clear the park road and allow motorists to get back to the Parks Highway.¹⁸⁴

The Savage check station, shown here, was located just west of the entrance to Savage River Campground. In 1990 it was moved to the west side of the Savage River bridge. Brad Ebel Collection



Between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s, when such major changes were taking place regarding the fall road opening, the policy regarding spring road opening remained much the same. Throughout this period, NPS maintenance crews began clearing the park road in early April and, as they worked their way west, park staff opened the road to regular passenger car traffic. They never, however, opened the road west of Teklanika Rest Stop until the Memorial Day weekend, when the shuttle buses began running and the regular summer traffic restrictions were put into effect. During the general management planning process of the mid-1980s, NPS officials briefly toyed with the idea of starting up the shuttle bus system “as soon as the road opens.” The final GMP, however, reverted to the former pattern, with a Memorial Day weekend opening for the shuttle bus system.¹⁸⁵

During these years, there was increasing pressure to open the road each spring in time to provide access to park visitors, Kantishna-area businesses, and other Kantishna-area landowners. NPS maintenance crews, however, still faced the daunting annual snow-removal task. As noted in previous chapters, staff had tried several innovative methods (including ice fences and the use of Primacord) to minimize aufeis at three major trouble spots along the park road. By the late 1970s, however, crews had abandoned those methods; instead, they relied on a grader to keep the road-surface open, and steam and oil heaters to keep the culverts free of ice.

During the early 1980s, park maintenance crews attempted to speed up the spring road-opening process as best as they could. The 1983 purchase

Beginning on September 11, 1992, the park experienced a major storm with heavy snowfall and high winds, making the park road impassable. Road crews began plowing a single lane, encountering 12' deep drifts, opening the road enough to convoy vehicles & people from Kantishna out of the park on the evening of September 18. This photo shows Eielson Visitor Center with an approaching plow. Brad Ebel Collection



This “ripper” attachment on the park’s D-7 Caterpillar was used in the spring to break up the aufeis, or overflow, which had accumulated over the winter at locations along the park road. Roads, NPS Photo, Denali National Park and Preserve



of a “ripper” attachment for the park’s D-7 Caterpillar successfully removed the accumulated aufeis layers at several problem areas along the park road. (Problem areas were located at approximately fifteen places along the park road, especially at Mile 4, Mile 5, and Mile 7.) That method, however, severely damaged the pavement surface layer, so park staff sought out a new ice-removal method. Two years later, crews constructed an insulated underdrain system in the Mile 4 area, but it proved ineffective in dealing with the perennial aufeis buildup. Between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s, road crews worked to prevent aufeis accumulation by periodically going over the problem areas on a grader

Road crew and equipment clear snow from Polychrome Pass during the spring road opening, 1991. Brad Ebel Collection



with a ripper attachment; that method minimized the need to employ a bulldozer, with a ripper attachment, during the spring road opening. But two new complications arose that prevented the long-term implementation of that two-pronged strategy. The first, in the late 1980s, took place because dog mushers and skiers showed an increasing interest in using the park road as an access route. In response to their concerns, road crews agreed to limit their pre-spring clearing operations to a single lane of the park road. Then, beginning in 1992, road crews were asked to stop their midwinter grading activities in the various aufeis problem areas; as a result, ice again emerged as a major, if occasional, problem for the spring road opening crews. Between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s, spring road opening operations typically began in late March or early April, and the road was normally open to bus traffic, both to Eielson Visitor Center and to Wonder Lake, between June 3 and June 10.¹⁸⁶

The Park Road Ownership Issue

A nagging question that arose during the 1980s and early 1990s was basic to the NPS’s ability to manage the park and its visitors: namely, who owned the park road? As noted in Chapters 3 through 5, the construction of the park road was



Spring road opening includes removal of snow and ice by the park road crew and the work of sunny weather to dry out the road. Brad Ebel Collection

the direct result of an April 1922 agreement between NPS Director Stephen Mather and Alaska Road Commission President James Steese. As a result of that agreement, the ARC laid out a right-of-way between McKinley Park Station and the townsite of Kantishna in the summer of 1922, and Commission employees—using primarily NPS funds—built the road, a few miles at a time, between 1923 and 1938. For more than forty years after the road’s completion, there had been little dispute regarding who owned it. But shortly after ANILCA’s passage, State of Alaska officials reinterpreted the road’s legal status. Noting that the NPS had recently “raised questions regarding the authority of the state to police the roads within Mt. McKinley [sic] National Park,” Assistant Attorney General William F. Cummings stated that “there seems to be little question that the state has the authority to exercise control over highways within the park.” The state used, as its primary argument, language in Section 21(a) of the Alaska Omnibus Act (which Congress passed in 1959) and a series of quit-claim deeds that followed as a result of that bill. One of these quit-claim deeds called for the Secretary of Commerce (of which the Bureau of Public Roads was an agency) to transfer the entire Denali Highway to the State of Alaska, including all of the highway mileage located within the “old park” boundaries.¹⁸⁷

NPS officials, when apprised of Cummings’ memo, asked the Interior Department Solicitor’s office to weigh in on the matter. In February 1983, U.S. attorney Robert C. Babson responded and concluded that the reasoning contained in

the state’s opinion was “singularly unpersuasive.” Noting that Section 11(a) of the Alaska Statehood Act had conferred exclusive jurisdiction¹⁸⁸ on the “old park” and any future additions to it, he stated that “the complete inapplicability of State jurisdiction in areas wherein the Federal Government has acquired either exclusive or partial legislative jurisdiction is a well settled principle of constitutional law.” He also contradicted the state’s memo by stating that the Alaska Omnibus Act and the resulting quit-claim deed applied only for those roads over which the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) had legal jurisdiction. The Denali Highway, however, had always been under NPS ownership and control; the BPR’s role at the park was limited to routine maintenance. Thus the Secretary of Commerce—despite the inadvertent language in the 1959 quit-claim deed—did not have the power to divest road mileage located within the park. A follow-up opinion by Interior Solicitor Don Bauer arrived at much the same conclusion as Babson; he further noted that in 1959, the state apparently “acquired nothing more than a limited right to use the road for road purposes, in accordance with NPS regulations and management prerogatives.”¹⁸⁹

For the remainder of the decade, the issue of road ownership lay quiet, and state officials continued to recognize federal hegemony over the road. When the issue erupted again, it came from an unexpected source: a Kantishna-area landowner. Throughout the 1980s, an ANILCA provision guaranteed inholders “adequate and feasible access for economic and other purposes...”¹⁹⁰ Given that provision, NPS and Kantishna-area



Once the park road is plowed in the spring and before it opens to regular traffic, outdoor enthusiasts find excellent biking and skiing. Brad Ebel Collection

businesses had maintained an informal access agreement; the lodges provided vans to transport guests back and forth, but motorized access by individual lodge guests and employees was discouraged.

In the spring of 1990, however, Dan Ashbrook, who owned 180 acres of patented land near the Moose Creek-Eldorado Creek confluence, announced his intention to open a 260-space recreational vehicle (RV) park on his land that summer. Breaking up the longstanding informal agreement, he contacted NPS officials and demanded that his customers be allowed access along the park road. Park officials recognized that putting hundreds of RVs and other vehicles on the park road might have major impacts on visitor safety and park wildlife, and they also predicted a sharp reduction in bus traffic. Given existing laws and regulations, the agency reluctantly acceded to Ashbrook's request. Beginning on June 12, anyone was free to drive the park road so long as they had some sort of business in

Kantishna or had been invited by a Kantishna-area landowner.¹⁹¹

Denali Superintendent Russell Berry responded to the agency's decision by holding public meetings at Denali Park, Fairbanks, and Anchorage on June 13, 14, and 15, respectively. Large crowds attended these meetings, most of them angry at the recent turn of events.¹⁹² The NPS's decision to publicize the new access rules rankled Ashbrook and his fiancée, Valerie Mundt, who felt that their business transaction should have been kept private. But the agency's action did not stop them from developing their property, which they called the Mount McKinley Gold Camp.¹⁹³

Publicity about the new Kantishna campground, both in Alaska and elsewhere, resulted in a huge level of interest, both from those hoping to camp there and in those who looked forward to a mid-season auto trip along the park road. But private vehicle traffic along the park road turned out to be far sparser than had been expected. Some

travelers, to be sure, were turned back at the Savage River check station because they had no verifiable business in Kantishna. But many others opted not to go because of media reports that the “campground” consisted of five unfinished tent frames placed on an uneven swath of mine tailings; the camp had no sign, no water or restroom facilities, no onsite staff, and no access without fording Moose Creek.¹⁰⁴ Traffic to the RV park, as it turned out, was sufficiently slight that the NPS never felt the need to reduce the number of daily tour or shuttle buses.¹⁰⁵ After the 1990 season, the RV park operation (which was managed by Ms. Mundt) struggled on, and for the next several years the campground’s clientele continued to drive out the park road. Her operation closed down after the 1996 season.¹⁰⁶

In the fall of 1990, development advocate Walter Hickel and Kantishna road advocate Jack Coghill were elected Alaska’s governor and lieutenant governor, respectively, on the Alaskan Independence Party (AIP) ticket. Both Hickel and Coghill felt that the state—not the federal government—should own the park road and thus have the right to manage its access. Neither man overtly protested the NPS’s ownership or management of the road. In March 1993, however, a radical AIP faction calling itself the Alaska Reclamation Committee announced its intention to drive their private vehicles over the park road during the July 4th weekend. A member of this group, having spoken to Kantishna-area miners about park access, claimed that the federal government had given the park road to the state in 1959. To stake that claim, the group planned to drive ten or twenty carloads of people to the Savage River check station and blockade the road. Superintendent Berry responded to the impending threat by meeting with the group’s leaders in Fairbanks on July 1st. At that meeting, Berry (according to one of the ARC’s organizers) stated that “he would not cite us and would not try to stop us.” Berry did, however, state that he would be mailing citations to each driver.¹⁰⁷ Given those ground rules, about 30 protesters arrived at the park on Saturday evening, July 3, stayed overnight at Kantishna, panned for gold in Moose Creek, and returned the following day.¹⁰⁸

At the Savage River check station on July 3, NPS rangers—as expected—jotted down the license plates of several vehicles and mailed citations to their owners. Not surprisingly, two of these owners, Dexter Clark and Kenneth Leake, appealed their citations to the Federal district court in a suit that was supported by the Hickel administration. The following April, Judge James Singleton ruled that the park road belonged to the federal government; as a result, Clark and

Leake were found guilty of trespassing and given a \$1 suspended fine.¹⁰⁹

The state, however, was not letting the matter drop. Beginning in the summer of 1993, Commissioner Bruce Campbell and other state Department of Transportation and Public Facilities officials compiled an extensive historical summary of jurisdiction and ownership issues pertaining to the McKinley Park Road. And after the April 1994 court decision, it was still pursuing a court case to have a judge look at more evidence. U.S. Senator Frank Murkowski, siding with the state and hoping to build an R.S. 2477-related case, put out a call to present and former Alaskans to search family albums for maps, photos, letters, or diaries for any evidence of a trail used before 1917 that roughly followed the present road right-of-way. The state attorney general’s office repeatedly stated that it planned to appeal the judge’s decision. None of the evidence gathered, however, was sufficient to justify a lawsuit, and since that time, no further threats have arisen to the federal government’s hegemony over the park road.¹⁰⁹

New Kantishna Route Proposals

During the 1980s, the State of Alaska not only questioned the federal government’s ownership of the park road; it also pressed the National Park Service for one or more new access routes to Kantishna. State officials, hoping to develop the state’s resources, had never been particularly comfortable with the agency’s 1972 decision to limit traffic on the park road west of the Savage River Campground, and before long, the state’s frustration resulted in efforts to construct a northern route from the Parks Highway to Kantishna.

Years earlier, there had been a number of ways to reach the Kantishna area. As noted in Chapter 3, several trails and wagon roads had spanned the distance between the Alaska Railroad and Kantishna during the early 1920s; one of these was a so-called “lower route” which headed west from Lignite to the Toklat River, then southwest via Clearwater Fork and Moose Creek to the gold camp. Prospectors had also been able to access the community by ascending various waterways to Roosevelt, Diamond, or Glacier City, all of which were short-lived settlements located not far north of Kantishna. Prospectors continued to use these routes until the late 1930s, when the park road (using the “upper route”) was extended to the Kantishna town site. The federal government’s decision to construct the park road, following the Alaska Road Commission’s long-term policy, meant that the ARC ceased maintaining other area routes. That action, plus

This former Fairbanks school bus, now more than 20 miles west of the Parks Highway near Healy, was used by a Stampede Trail construction crew in 1961, then abandoned. In 1992, 24-year-old Chris McCandless lived (and died) in this bus. His life, and the four-month ordeal prior to his death, became the subject of a 1997 Jon Krakauer book (*Into the Wild*) and a 2007 Sean Penn movie of the same name. NPS Photo



a diminished level of Kantishna-area mining activity, brought about the abandonment of other nearby trails and wagon roads.²⁰¹

Between the late 1930s and the early 1970s, various people tried to build an additional access road in the area; the primary party was Earl Pilgrim, owner and operator of the Stampede Mine. As is described more fully in Chapter 14, Pilgrim purchased the mine in 1936, and that fall he hewed out an informal “tractor road” to the Lignite railroad stop and hauled out several loads of stibnite (antimony ore). This route was the Stampede winter trail, which was along a right-of-way that was similar to the so-called “lower route” that ARC personnel had surveyed during the early 1920s.²⁰² That route, however, was uneconomical, and during the war years Pilgrim bladed out an airstrip. In addition, he worked with NPS officials to rough out a route from his mine south along the Toklat River to the park road. But impediments—initially financial, later policy-related—prevented the route’s construction.

By 1960, Pilgrim was working on new road plans with officials for the new State of Alaska’s pioneer road program. That November, Yutan Construction Co. of Fairbanks submitted a winning (and low) bid of \$250,000 to build a road between Lignite and Stampede. Yutan personnel began work in the spring of 1961, and in order to sup-

port the field crew, the company hauled a retired Fairbanks school bus out to a site just east of the Sushana River. Two seasons were allotted for the work, but by October 1961, state Department of Public Works personnel declared that the terms of the contract had been satisfied.²⁰³ Pilgrim, prior to construction, had made it known that any viable route between Stampede and the railroad needed to follow the relatively well-drained terraces. But the contractor instead decided to follow much of the same wet, boggy ground that Alaska Road Commission personnel had rejected back in the 1920s. A Yutan employee, with some difficulty, was able to drive a four-wheel-drive vehicle all the way west to the Stampede airstrip and back; that “road,” however, was never used again by a wheeled vehicle.²⁰⁴

Soon after the NPS limited traffic over the park road in 1972, some Alaskans began to advocate the construction of a new road to Kantishna. State transportation planners, during this period, tried to legitimize several different routes connecting the Anchorage-Fairbanks Highway with Kantishna. But by late 1974, when the Alaska Planning Group published its *Final Environmental Statement* on the proposed park additions, the state proposed only one new route in the area. That route avoided the old Stampede route; instead, it left the new highway at Rex (28 miles north of Lignite and 41 miles north of McKinley Park Station), headed west to the Toklat River,

then angled southwest to Kantishna before heading almost due west to Telida.²⁰⁵

Shortly after Congress passed ANILCA, state Senator Frank Ferguson (D-Kotzebue) and Rep. Joe Hayes (R-Anchorage) showed their displeasure with the newly-enlarged park by filing resolutions “requesting the NPS to improve an old mining road through the northern additions to Denali [i.e., the old Stampede Mine road] and extend the route to the Denali Park Road at Wonder Lake.” Supporters, hoping to see a one-way loop road constructed through the park and showing its concern about the park road’s safety in the wake of the 1981 bus accident, noted that the road would benefit park visitors and improve safety. On February 24, 1982, the Senate began moving Ferguson’s resolution, and on March 3, the Senate passed it with a unanimous vote. The resolution then moved over to the House. On May 27, the House defeated it, 17-13; a day later, however, the vote was reconsidered and it passed, 24-11. Governor Hammond signed it on June 2.²⁰⁶ Nothing came of it, however.

During the mid-1980s, scattered voices in the Fairbanks area continued to push for an alternate route to Kantishna. The NPS, however, showed no enthusiasm for it. As noted in the park’s draft GMP,

The potential for upgrading the Stampede Trail to provide access into the far northern area of the park was eliminated from further consideration because of the estimated cost of construction and the potential for environmental damage. The *Final Environmental Impact Statement, Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study* (USD1 1984) estimated the cost of this road to be \$100 million to \$150 million. There is currently no economic justification for building this road. This trail crosses the denning areas of the Toklat and Savage wolf packs, the winter range of the Denali caribou herd, the major movement corridor along the Toklat River for both wolves and caribou, and many miles of pristine country that currently are suitable for wilderness designation.

In response to this statement, the State of Alaska responded with its own statement, portions of which were incorporated into the agency’s final GMP. The NPS’s overall stance regarding alternate road access, however, remained largely unchanged.²⁰⁷

During the late 1980s, Senator John B. “Jack” Coghill (R-Nenana) revived momentum in the northern-access idea. In 1988, he and Senator Ken Fanning (R-Fairbanks) lent vocal support to the idea, and a year later, Coghill introduced Senate bills SB 185 and SB 186 to authorize and fund the construction of a “Kantishna Highway” between Lignite, Stampede, and Kantishna. The proposed \$72 million highway would be funded almost entirely from federal sources. Neither bill got past the committee stage. Another idea that came forth during this period was that Kantishna might be accessed by railroad. Bob Thomas, a Fairbanks transportation engineer, spearheaded the idea and noted that a railroad offered the possibility of access but without the dangers to wildlife that a road would entail.²⁰⁸

During the mid-to-late 1980s, another issue welled to the surface that offered the potential to open up not only a new northern access route but other access routes besides. By using an old federal law, called Revised Statute 2477, state officials hoped to regain control over hundreds of federally-managed routes throughout Alaska, and in 1990 they announced that they intended to use the provisions in this statute to open up a northern access route to Kantishna.

The controversy over this issue had been brewing for a long time. In July 1866, Congress had passed a bill that dealt with lode mining, among other provisions. To allow access to mines on public lands, Section 8 of the bill contained the following access provision: “And be it further enacted, That the right-of-way for the construction of highways over public lands, not reserved for public uses, is hereby granted.” Seven years later, Congress reorganized the federal laws, and the above statement became a right-of-way ordinance known as Section 2477 of the *Revised Statutes of the United States*.²⁰⁹ In 1976, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act repealed R.S. 2477; Congress, however, inserted a clause protecting “existing rights,” including any rights-of-way that may have been established before 1976. The State of Alaska, recognizing the importance of this clause, embarked on an extensive effort to identify as many routes as possible that had known, established historical uses, and by the mid-1980s they had identified 28 potential R.S. 2477 rights-of-way within Denali National Park and Preserve. (A description of these rights-of-way was included in the park’s final GMP.) In 1988, Interior Secretary Donald Hodel established a broad definition of what qualified as a pre-existing right-of-way; and if that right-of-way was later incorporated into a conservation unit such as a national park, pre-existing rights still predominated. This action emboldened

officials in western states who hoped to gain control over road access, and in 1990 State of Alaska officials announced that they intended to open the 92-mile-long “Kantishna Trail” as a test case for public access across federal park lands. This route, which was one of the 28 that state land planners had previously selected, went from Rex to the Toklat River and on to Kantishna; it was similar, though not identical, to the route in the “Kantishna Highway” proposal that Senator Coghill and others had been advocating in the Alaska legislature.²⁰⁰

The northern access issue heated up considerably during the early 1990s. In November 1990, Walter Hickel, running on the Alaska Independence Party ticket, was elected Alaska’s governor along with his running mate, Senator Coghill. Hickel, shortly after his election, made no secret (according to one newspaper article) that he was “Alaska’s biggest dreamer,” and Coghill, the newly-elected lieutenant governor, was one of the most visible and outspoken critics of NPS road access policy. The new governor believed in development through the construction of major projects, and by the summer of 1991 he had focused on the construction of six major road segments, one of which was the Stampede Trail Road from Healy to Kantishna.²⁰¹ Hickel, U.S. Senator Frank Murkowski, and various private developers recognized that the Kantishna area had some 6,000 acres in private hands (most of which were on unpatented mining claims), and given proper access, they hoped to see the construction of one or more large-scale hotels in the area. The state, during this period, felt that constructing a new Kantishna access road would cost between \$85 million and \$125 million.²⁰²

During this same period, private interests—continuing the notions first set forth by Bob Thomas in the late 1980s—advanced new proposals for railroad access into the heart of the park. During the early 1990s, the idea took shape among several Fairbanks residents that a railroad, using private financing, should be built between Healy and Wonder Lake. That group, led by former contractor Joe Fields, became the nucleus for Kantishna Holdings, Inc. For the next several years the group worked largely out of the public eye. Several state senators and legislators, however, were sufficiently aware of their activities that they gave deference to the group’s proposals in upcoming legislation.²⁰³

To shed further light on the access issue, the NPS organized its own study. This effort got started soon after the Ashbrook-RV park controversy (see previous section) made headlines; more specifically, it followed a meeting between Sen.

Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska) and NPS Director James Ridenour. The ad hoc, seven-member group included John Morehead from the Washington office, Bob Barbee from Yellowstone, Paul Haertel from the regional office, and park superintendent Russ Berry.²⁰⁴ The group began its work with several high-level meetings in Alaska in mid-February 1991. It reconvened in July with a visit along the Denali park road, and in November it issued its report. The *Denali Access Task Force Report* recommended that park congestion could be eased with a passenger railroad or even a monorail system, and it suggested that both modes be studied further. But the report dashed cold water on alternate road access. “A second road would dramatically change the character of the park,” the report noted. Such a road “puts at risk the up-close viewing of animals that draw people to Denali. It adds nothing to a visitor’s ability to see the mountain. And it changes the visitor’s perception that he is riding to a special place, a place set apart from the urban world of pavement and high-speed transportation.” The report candidly admitted that the cost of building a railroad or monorail “is higher than for a road, and could prove an impossible obstacle.” But it also noted that “the system could prove a valuable demonstration project for other federal parks...”.²⁰⁵ New access modes, in fact, were already being proposed for further study; in late 1991, via ISTEA (see below), Congress authorized funds for the study of alternative transportation systems in several national parks.²⁰⁶

Little activity took place regarding alternate park access for more than a year, but in the summer of 1993, the Hickel administration unveiled a new set of highway projects for which it was advocating. Gone was the Stampede Trail Road, which it had highlighted in 1991; in its place, however, was a new 200-mile highway that spanned the distance between Nenana (on the Parks Highway) and the Kuskokwim River village of McGrath. State officials also planned a “possible spur to Kantishna if the state can get past the objections of the National Park Service.” The NPS had no problem with the construction of the McGrath road, even if it (in the words of agency spokesman John Quinley) “nipped Denali National Park by a mile or so.” The state applied for, and received, a \$1.2 million federal grant to study the proposed road, and various park staff assisted the state in that study. During the study period, McGrath residents came forth and stated that they were far more interested in a road to the Yukon River (which would require about 75 miles of new road construction) than the 200-mile route to Nenana. Residents of other points along the proposed road, such as Nikolai and Lake Minchumina, likewise came out against the proposed

Nenana-McGrath road. And a state transportation official, queried on the subject, readily admitted that the primary project goal was access to Kantishna, not the Kuskokwim; having been thwarted in an earlier attempt to study a highway to Kantishna, he simply incorporated those ideas into the larger McGrath project.²⁰⁷

During this period, the Alaska legislature—recognizing that Denali was federal land and that any funds expended on transportation improvements would be largely funded by federal sources—did what it could to push Kantishna-related development. In February 1992, Shirley Craft (D-Fairbanks) and other Railbelt senators had introduced a resolution urging “the Governor and the executive branch to be aggressive in their resolve to ... develop ... new environmentally sound access routes into Kantishna and a Kantishna activity area.” And then—perhaps having Kantishna Holdings’ railroad plans in mind—state senators also asked state agencies to work with others “to thoroughly investigate the potential for the private sector to construct and operate a transportation system, such as an electric railroad, and other facilities that would serve the public needs.” That resolution (SJR 44) passed the Senate March 23, on a 16-1 vote, but got bogged down in the House.²⁰⁸ A year later, Tom Brice (D-Fairbanks) and other House members introduced a similar resolution. The main focus, as before, was “supporting increased access near Mt. McKinley through establishment of a visitor activity area at Kantishna.” But given Interior Secretary Babbitt’s stated interest for a railroad into the area, the new resolution (HJR 28) asked state and federal authorities to “thoroughly investigate the potential of establishing a rail utility corridor into Kantishna in which the private sector could construct and operate a transportation system and other facilities that would serve the public needs.” That resolution handily passed the House (in March 1993), but for the time being it made little headway in the Senate.²⁰⁹

The legislature’s effort to encourage a new Kantishna access route dovetailed with plans being suggested by a top federal official. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, during a mid-August 1993 auto trip down the park road with Governor Hickel, noted that “I think rail is the future for the national parks,” and Babbitt stated during their day-long conversation that he was willing to consider either a light rail system, a narrow-gauge line, or a cog railway to bridge the distance between Kantishna and the Parks Highway. These statements were consistent with the recommendations of the 1992 Denali Access Study. Inasmuch as Hickel wanted transportation improvements in any form—a railroad, a new road, or an

upgrade to the existing road—Babbitt’s statements sounded an optimistic note with Hickel and other development advocates.²¹⁰ Perhaps based on what Babbitt said, the resolution that had withered in the 1993 Alaska legislature gained new life when the following year’s session began; the resolution passed the Senate in January 1994, and Governor Hickel signed it on February 8.²¹¹

During 1992 and 1993, in the midst of the State of Alaska’s efforts to provide for new access into the park, the NPS was hard at work on its own study that was intended to evaluate the economic and environmental impacts of various proposed access modes. When Congress, in late 1991, passed the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (commonly known as ISTEA), it included a provision (Section 1050) requesting “that a study be conducted of alternatives for visitor transportation in the national park system.”²¹² The NPS responded by choosing two parks for study: Yellowstone and Denali.

The Denali study, formally known as the Alternative Transportation Modes Feasibility Study, was completed in May 1994; it was a logical follow-up to the agency’s Denali Access Study, issued in early 1992. The study made no policy recommendations; it did, however, provide financial estimates for construction, plus annual operation and maintenance, for various alternative transportation scenarios. The least expensive alternative, not surprisingly, was a replacement of the existing shuttle bus fleet with 52-passenger buses (\$21.4 million). Slightly more costly was the purchase of a fleet of larger 72-passenger buses (\$36.7 million). The least expensive new transportation mode was a 6-mile aerial tram connecting the Chulitna River crossing area with Alder Point (\$87.2 million). More expensive alternatives included a new road connecting Healy with Kantishna along the Stampede Road right-of-way (\$173 million), a railroad along the same route (\$218 million), a cog rail between the Denali Park Hotel and Eielson Visitor Center (\$314.5 million), and a cog rail between the hotel and Wonder Lake (\$413.5 million).²¹³

By the time this study was released, a more high-profile group—the Denali Task Force, a hand-picked group that operated under the aegis of the NPS Advisory Board—had begun to deliberate a variety of park-related issues. The Task Force’s report, issued in October 1994, contained a number of recommendations about park access and transportation, but none suggested new route construction. Specifically, the report did not recommend a new northern route to Kantishna, a railroad along the Stampede Route, a cog rail paralleling the park road, or an aerial tramway

south of the Alaska Range. The report even took a dim view of the idea that the existing shuttle bus fleet be replaced by larger-sized buses. Its only recommendation for improvement—modest indeed, under the circumstances—was that the agency “improve the shuttle bus system by using buses designed for the park road with safety, comfort, and viewing in mind.”²²⁴

Infrastructure and Staff Growth

As noted above and in previous chapters, the park—despite many years of high visitation and repeated proposals to remedy the situation—had never had its own entrance-area visitor center, either during the 1980s or in any prior decade. Beginning in 1939, the new park hotel became the ad hoc visitor congregation point, and until the late 1950s the small number of visitors—and their ways of being transported to and through the park—reaffirmed the importance of the hotel’s centrality as it pertained to visitor activity. But in August 1957, the completion of the Denali Highway to the park brought thousands of motorists to the park, many of whom paid scant attention to the hotel. To cater to the new and growing legions, the NPS in 1959 built a small entrance station on the park road just east of the Alaska Railroad crossing. Thirteen years later, the NPS erected a larger but still inadequate Visitor Information Center (using a double-wide trailer) at the entrance to Riley Creek Campground. As noted in Chapter 11, various proposals had been put forth to establish a park visitor center, some as early as the Mission 66 days of the mid-1950s, but none had ever come to fruition.

Throughout this period, the primary park interpretive location remained the McKinley Park Hotel; ranger-led lectures and slide shows were offered here, and for many years the agency also staffed an interpretive desk. But beginning in the 1960s, the increasing popularity of the hotel—and the ever-larger space requirements that accompanied that popularity—made it more difficult to conduct interpretive programs there. Despite those pressures, the agency continued to offer interpretive services at the hotel through the summer of 1972, and it continued its presence at the new (1973) hotel for the remainder of the decade. But in the spring of 1979, the NPS installed a 40’ x 60’ “circus tent” just behind the hotel.²²⁵ This facility soon suffered structural problems, and it worked only marginally as an interpretive site. As part of the arrangement that resulted in the 1981 concessions agreement, the park concessioner agreed to build a new “audio visual room” adjacent to the hotel. This structure, later called an auditorium, was completed by the late summer of 1982 and opened to the public in June 1983.

In the early 1980s, the NPS signaled its interest in de-emphasizing the hotel’s interpretive role by moving to establish its own visitor center. In March 1982, the agency (as noted above) released a draft Development Concept Plan (DCP) for the park road corridor, and a key aspect of that plan was the construction of a new interpretive and transportation center to replace the existing double-wide trailer at the Riley Creek Campground entrance. That recommendation remained in the final DCP issued in January 1983. Later that year, NPS planners began working on a park general management plan. Perhaps because park road facilities had been studied so exhaustively for the just-completed DCP, the agency’s draft GMP, released in March 1985, continued to recommend what was now called a “visitor access center” in the Riley Creek entrance area. The final (November 1986) GMP reiterated that recommendation and further suggested the addition of an adjacent shuttle bus staging area.²²⁶

Funding the new center, however, proved problematic. By the end of 1983, NPS officials noted that they gained “tentative approval to have the structure built in 1986,” and the March 1985 draft GMP optimistically noted that “construction of a new \$3.7 million visitor access center is underway and will be completed in the spring of 1987.” But the final (November 1986) GMP, reflecting the loss of funding, suggested that the VAC was still in the proposal stage.²²⁷ It was not until early 1987 that the agency was able to award a construction contract; that September, the winning contractor—Ahtna Native Regional Corporation—began site preparation. By the end of 1988, the “basic shell” of the new building had been erected, and by late 1989 the building was complete, along with an adjacent 271-space parking lot. The new Visitor Access Center opened during Memorial Day weekend 1990; as the superintendent noted, the facility was “a vast improvement” over the 18-year-old double-wide trailer that it replaced.²²⁸ Since then, the VAC (today known as the Wilderness Access Center) has served as the primary way in which motorized visitors are introduced to the park and its various transportation, camping, and backcountry options. In addition, the various audio-visual programs in its auditorium have played a key interpretive role for many incoming visitors.

Between the passage of ANILCA and the mid-1990s, the park’s budget more than doubled, from \$2.6 million in 1980 to more than \$6.9 million in 1995. This budget growth is perhaps not surprising for a park unit that had just tripled in size and in which recreational visitation had almost tripled (from 216,000 in 1980 to 543,000 in 1995). (See Appendix A.) The number of staff



Russell W. Berry, Jr. served as park superintendent from June 1989 to October 1994. NPS Photo



The new Visitor Access Center, opened in 1990, provided a much larger space for visitor services including a theater for interpretive programs and areas for issuing shuttle bus tickets, campground permits, and backcountry permits. Tom Habecker Collection

during this period also grew to some extent; the number of “full-time equivalents” grew from 21 to 55.²²⁹ The amount of park housing available for employees, however, rose not at all. People who were selected to work at the park were usually informed that government housing was not available, and given the severe climate and the relative lack of development in areas surrounding the park, several new hires reluctantly decided to not accept the positions that had been offered to them. Those who stayed, however, soon became settled in areas scattered from Deneki Lakes and McKinley Village north to Otto Lake and Healy, and several neighborhoods located most closely to the park boundary were populated primarily by current or former NPS employees.²³⁰ Within the park, the growth in seasonal employment at the park resulted in an increased number of employees living at the Toklat Road Camp, “C Camp,” and adjacent to the Wonder Lake Ranger Station.²³¹

The park, during this period, enjoyed a remarkably stable management regime. As noted earlier in this chapter, Alaska Area Director John Cook hired Robert C. “Clay” Cunningham, a biologist from Gateway National Recreation Area. (See Appendix B.) Cunningham, as did his immediate predecessors, worked during a time of major

conflict and change; he nevertheless retained his position for more than 8½ years. Cunningham stepped down in March 1989 and moved on to become the General Superintendent of the Southern Arizona Group, a cluster of NPS units headquartered in Phoenix. For the next six months, the park was managed by Thomas W. Griffiths, who had been the park’s chief ranger since 1981. That September, Regional Director Boyd Evison appointed as the next park superintendent Russell W. Berry, Jr., who at the time was serving as the superintendent at Voyageurs National Park in northeastern Minnesota. Berry, a native of Portsmouth, Virginia, remained on the job until late October 1994, when he became the superintendent of Cape Hatteras National Seashore in eastern North Carolina. Upon Berry’s departure, Regional Director Robert Barbee asked Steve Martin—at that time the superintendent at Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve—to take over the Denali job in an acting capacity. Martin remained acting superintendent until the following March, at which time the “acting” designation was removed.²³²

During most of the 1980s and on into the 1990s, the leadership responsibilities at Denali were to some extent a shared task. Ralph Tingey, a ranger at Grand Teton National Park, became Denali’s



The west side of the new Visitor Access Center provides for boarding of shuttle buses. NPS Interp. Collection, #5004, Denali National Park and Preserve

management assistant beginning in May 1981, and for the next eight years he and Cunningham worked together on a wide range of management issues. That teamwork remained until August 1990, when Tingey moved to Kotzebue and became the Northwest Alaska Areas superintendent. Another decision maker appeared in 1989, when Assistant Superintendent Linda Toms came on board. Toms, later known as Linda Buswell, continued to serve in that capacity until the late 1990s.²³³

The Fate of the Park Hotel

A major question that hung over the heads of park managers throughout the 1980s and on into the 1990s was what to do about the park hotel. As noted in Chapter 8, the McKinley Park Hotel had burned in September 1972, and due to the frenetic efforts of all parties involved, a new McKinley Park Station Hotel was ready for park visitors in late May 1973. For the next several years, NPS officials repeatedly mentioned the hotel's "temporary" role, but in the mid- to late-1970s—with the much larger debate over the fate of Alaska's public lands being debated both by administration officials and by Congress—the hotel issue receded into the background. Throughout this period, and on into the 1980s, a small number of conservationists advocated

removing the hotel, while the Alaska Congressional delegation advocated either retaining the existing hotel or constructing a replacement. (The development-minded *Anchorage Times*, during this period, published a series of poignant cartoons emphasizing the rustic, inadequate hotel accommodations.²³⁴) The park concessioner, by the early 1980s, strongly favored retaining the existing park hotel—in September 1981, as noted above, it signed a new concessions contract calling for numerous improvements in the immediate hotel vicinity—but inasmuch as the concessioner also operated the newly-constructed McKinley Chalets just outside the park boundary, it did not have a vested interest in expanding the present hotel or replacing it with a larger facility.

During the early to mid-1980s, as noted above, the park underwent a series of planning efforts, most of which included an analysis of the park hotel. Between 1981 and 1983, agency officials wrote an environmental assessment (EA) and development concept plan (DCP) for the park road corridor. In March 1982, the draft DCP—which echoed similar comments in the park's February 1981 interim DCP—noted that "The McKinley Park Station Hotel will receive extensive renovation, primarily to replace obsolete facilities



Ralph Tingey served as Denali's management assistant from 1981 to August 1990. He retired from the National Park Service as the Associate Regional Director for Resources and Operations in June 2006. NPS Photo

Stephen P. Martin served as Acting Superintendent of Denali National Park and Preserve for 5 months before becoming Superintendent, a post he held from March 1995 to January 2002. NPS Photo



and conform with life/safety codes. ... The hotel will not be expanded." These comments were repeated in the final (February 1983) park road corridor DCP.²³⁵

Soon after the park's development concept plan was released, the NPS's plans regarding the park hotel abruptly changed. Development advocates, either inside or outside the agency, recognized that the NPS maintained a Visitor Facility Fund, which was a repository for concessioner franchise fees. The existence of this fund brought forth a \$12,250,000 proposal to replace the deteriorating hotel, gift shop and support facilities with new, permanent replacements. That fall, regional officials forwarded the proposal to NPS Director Russ Dickenson. In February 1984, Dickenson rejected the proposal, noting the extent to which the project would deplete the fund. But soon after that rejection, funding for the hotel project was quickly inserted into the Service-wide Line Item Construction Program. (This is the program through which the majority of all large NPS construction or rehabilitation projects are accomplished.) The Denali Park Hotel project was given a relatively high priority within that program. Advance planning monies were appropriated in fiscal year 1985, and in February 1985 a \$400,000 contract was awarded to the Anchorage architectural firm of Maynard and Partch for preliminary site analysis and design. At that time, the construction cost for the reconstruction work was an estimated \$11,200,000. Predictions called for on-the-ground work to be during the 1987 fiscal year.²³⁶ The park's draft general manage-

ment plan, which was released in March 1985, reflected the agency's new direction; it stated that "the reconstruction of the Denali National Park Hotel, a \$14 million construction project, is scheduled to begin in 1987."

Later in 1985, the NPS decided to once again examine the necessity of a new park hotel, and by year's end the park's revised GMP proposed the preparation of a new DCP that would focus specifically on the park hotel. During 1986, the scope of the proposed DCP was further refined, and the park's final GMP, issued in November of that year, noted that "An amendment to the 1983 *Development Concept Plan* is being developed for the park entrance. It will discuss the options of removing the hotel from the park, replacing or rehabilitating the existing temporary structures, or building a new hotel. The public will be involved in the development and review of the DCP/EA."²³⁷ The entrance-area DCP, in fact, was initiated before the close of 1985, and by December 1986 the document had been finalized and was awaiting public comment.²³⁸

In June 1987 the draft DCP—billed as an addendum to the 1983 DCP/EA—was released to the public. By this time the NPS, after analyzing the hotel's structural and safety-related problems, had concluded that "the construction of a new hotel with the same capacity is now considered a better choice than renovating the existing hotel." The draft DCP, therefore, offered two choices: either replace the existing hotel with a new hotel (to be located between the existing hotel and the railroad depot), or remove the existing hotel. A key to the first option was that the new hotel would provide an "array of alternative activities for people who were not scheduled for a bus tour" that "would help visitors gain a better understanding and appreciation of Denali's resources." Given that intent, the agency planned to convert its four-year-old auditorium into a visitor center, and it also planned to offer easy access to sled-dog demonstrations, horseback rides, scenic overflights, and Nenana River float trips. To give the public a chance to weigh in on the hotel option, the agency offered a 60-day public comment period, to August 14; midway through that process, it held public meetings in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and at the park. The following March, the agency chose the first option; it announced its intention to build a new, 140-room hotel to replace the present Denali Park Hotel and to open up an adjacent visitor center.²³⁹

Given the final go-ahead, work on the project edged forward. In 1989, however, a new Anchorage architectural firm, GDM Incorporated, was



This 1980s view of the McKinley Park Hotel area shows concession employee housing in a clearing on the right, the temporary hotel in the center, and the original 1938 dormitory and powerhouse near the hotel. NPS Interp. Collection, #3502, Denali National Park and Preserve

asked to take over hotel planning. By the end of the year the park superintendent noted that “there was a very charged and energized feeling from everyone involved that this time the project would be carried to completion.”²⁴⁰

During 1990 and 1991, design work on the hotel slowly progressed to completion, and top officials at both the park and the agency’s regional office continued to push the project forward. A presentation prepared after a May 1991 work session predicted that the hotel would open in June 1994. During this period, however, an increasing number of people began to argue against the project. Some did so on cost grounds, because a project budgeted at \$7 million during the late 1980s had ballooned to \$25 million in late 1990 and to \$32 million in early 1991; the \$7 million, moreover, would have been paid for by the park concessioner, while the proposed \$25 million and \$32 million price tags were to be funded by the U.S. taxpayer. Other people decried the increasingly large footprint of the proposed hotel, inasmuch as the hotel complex that was proposed in 1988 would occupy 7 acres of ground, but by 1991 it had swelled to 13.5 acres. Several protested on environmental grounds, noting that the brief environmental analysis conducted as part of the 1982 park-road corridor DCP was insufficient

to address National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) criteria. And still others saw that the hotel was increasingly unnecessary, because of the large and increasing number of hotel rooms on land just outside of the park’s eastern entrance. The first organized group to come out against the hotel during this period was the Healy-based “No Hotel Committee,” which issued a long manifesto on the subject in 1990. Before long, this committee was joined by the Denali Citizens Council (which had supported a new hotel in 1987) and a number of park employees, acting on an individual basis.²⁴¹

These protests forced NPS officials to take another look at the hotel issue. In August 1991 the agency’s new regional director, John M. Morehead, noted that “to adequately address the concerns expressed by the Denali Citizens Council and other local residents with regard to NEPA compliance, we now propose to consolidate and evaluate all changes by producing an amendment/environmental assessment to the 1983 DCP ... Public review of the document will include a series of public meetings.”²⁴² Morehead’s proposal resulted in a March 1992 public review process, after which park officials released a new plan amendment. That draft document stated that the new hotel (which was “designed to

be symbolic of the Alaska wilderness rather than a ... collection of architecturally unrelated buildings”) would be just 115 feet east of the present hotel, but the proposed camper services complex and the hostel would be located near Riley Creek Campground, not adjacent to the hotel, as had been suggested earlier. Park headquarters would move to a new wing of the existing park auditorium, the shuttle bus parking area would be moved to an area between the sewage lagoon and Parks Highway, and Riley Creek Campground would be expanded by 50 sites, and a new concessioner’s employee dining room would be constructed. Other improvements were planned as well. That July, Morehead ruled that the proposed project was sufficiently minor that no environmental impact statement was required.²⁴³

Meanwhile, project planning continued. The project schedule called for a final review of plans in mid-May of 1992, a groundbreaking later that year, and the project’s completion in the spring of 1995. By the spring of 1992, the cost for the proposed new hotel had increased to \$34.6 million, and scores of additional hotel rooms had been built near the park’s eastern entrance. The park concessioner, moreover, had still not agreed to commit to a financial sponsorship for construction of the new park hotel. These and other factors brought continued, and increasingly pointed, protest letters to Interior Department officials.

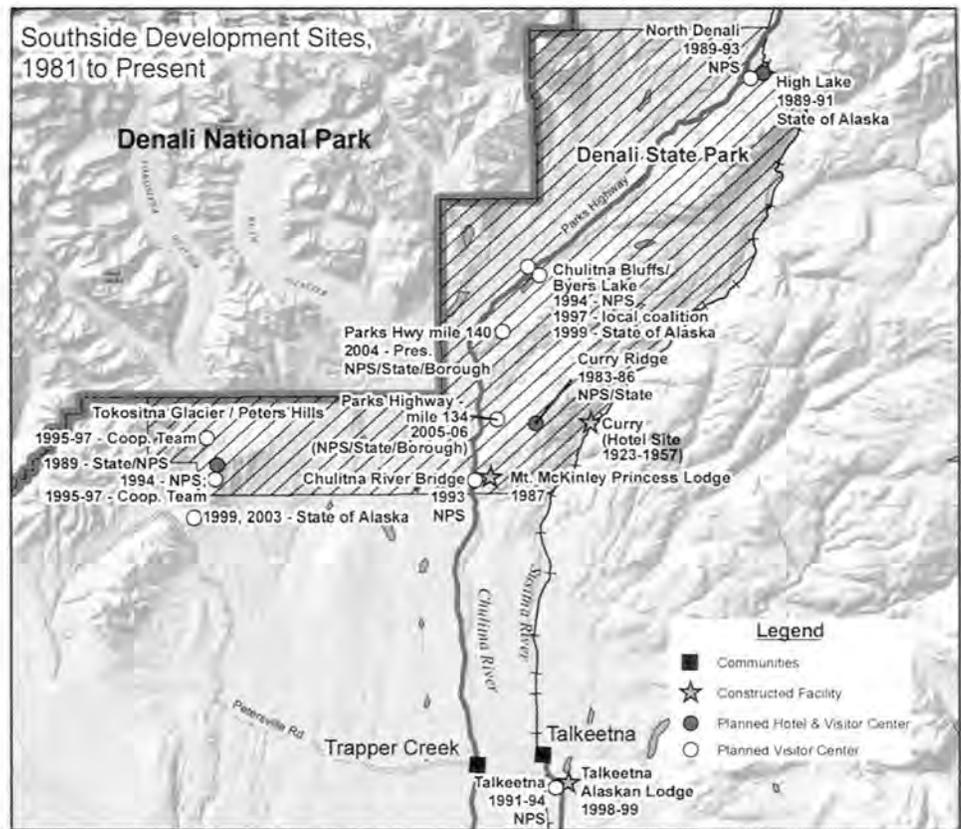
Those letters, individually or collectively, apparently piqued the curiosity of the Interior Department’s Office of Inspector General, which announced—much to the surprise of NPS officials—that it would perform a project audit. That audit began in mid-May, and it was completed when it issued its report in September. The report concluded that a new 140-room hotel was unnecessary because there was enough private lodging outside the park entrance to satisfy demand, and because the hotel’s \$325-per-square-foot construction cost was more than three times that of outside enterprises. That report was soon shared with the project’s prime sponsor, U.S. Senator Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), along with other legislators and administration officials. In early December 1992, Stevens went over the report with NPS Director James Ridenour. Shortly afterward, Stevens capitulated; noting that “we have better ways to spend the money to meet the needs of Alaskans,” he stated that “I’m not going to push forward to add to the budget of that hotel.”²⁴⁴ Stevens’s decision brought to an end all efforts to construct a new park hotel. Still to be decided, however, was whether—or for how long—the NPS would allow the existing hotel to remain operating.

Continuing Frustrations Over South Side Development

An issue similar to that of the Denali Park Hotel, and that also defied an easy solution, was whether a new hotel would be constructed south of the Alaska Range. During the general management planning process of 1983–86, the NPS and the State of Alaska had cooperated on a plan for “the development of a full range of lodging and other visitor services ... on the south end of Curry Ridge.” That plan called for “major involvement from the private sector.”²⁴⁵ By the time the GMP was released, however, Alaska was in the midst of hard times brought on by post-oil-boom economic doldrums and low oil prices, and neither the State of Alaska nor private enterprise was in any mood to seriously consider such a bold new development project. In addition, scattered environmentalists and local residents publicly opposed the siting of any major facilities on Curry Ridge.²⁴⁶

Given those conditions, state and federal officials, acting jointly, stepped back and considered a variety of site options. The NPS, as part of that effort, provided \$100,000, and moved to contract a detailed study of various potential development sites. State officials felt likewise, but given the state’s finances, they were unable to provide near-term financial assistance. In June 1987, private developers announced that they were moving ahead with plans to build a \$4 million, 150-room lodge-convention center at the south end of Denali State Park, just north of the Chulitna River bridge; they noted that construction would begin “within the next several weeks” with a 1988 completion date. State and federal officials applauded the move; planners, however, pinned their hopes on a larger, \$20 million to \$40 million project at an as-yet-undetermined site in the state park.²⁴⁷ (See Map 3.) In 1988, the NPS and the State of Alaska agreed to work cooperatively on the completion of the Denali State Park master plan, a process that had been started in 1986.²⁴⁸ That plan, which was completed in June 1989, called for the construction of a 200-room hotel and a visitor center at the state park’s north end: more specifically near so-called High Lake, just south of the Parks Highway-Alaska Railroad intersection. (This was in the same general area as Chulitna Pass, where Economic Development Administration contractors had selected a hotel site back in December 1968; see Chapter 7.) In addition, the plan called for a 20-room wilderness lodge in the Tokositna area and a road (with a new Chulitna River bridge) from the north-end hotel to nearby Eldridge Glacier.²⁴⁹

Five months after the completion of the revised state park master plan, State Parks Director Neil



Map 3. Southside Development Sites, 1981 to Present.

Johannsen decided that the state would forge ahead, on its own, with the High Lake hotel project; he hoped to solicit bids during the winter of 1989-90, with construction to begin in the summer of 1991. Two months later, in January 1990, Alaska Governor Steve Cowper did what he could to back Johannsen; he announced that the state would forego \$4 million in federal funds for the project in order to skirt any delays that might be incurred in preparing a federal environmental impact statement. Instead, Cowper asked the Alaska legislature for \$4.4 million to fund a visitor center and an additional \$10 million for a road and utilities related to the proposed hotel. State officials promised, at the time, that they would prepare an environmental study for the project. They admitted, however, that the hotel construction plan was on a “fast track,” which meant that the environmental study might not be begun until after a potential developer signed a contract; furthermore, the study might not be completed until after construction had begun. Environmental groups, chagrined at the perceived high-handed action, filed suit against the state that spring. Almost a year later, in February 1991, Superior Court Judge Victor Carlson sided with the plaintiffs and demanded that the hotel plan go through a new series of hearings and studies before construction could begin. Johannsen and other Hickel administration officials viewed the ruling, at the time, as only a temporary setback, and they considered appealing the judge’s decision. But

no such appeal was filed, and based on ongoing NPS actions (see below), the state apparently abandoned its effort to steer the construction of a High Lake hotel and visitor center.²⁵⁰

While state officials pushed their own agenda regarding a south side hotel, NPS officials did what they could to push for visitor facilities in the state park. To fulfill promises that had been made in the national park and preserve’s 1986 general management plan, and also to fulfill the agency’s obligations pertaining to the state park master plan, NPS planners in October 1989 announced that they would prepare an environmental impact statement for a “South Denali Visitor Center,” which would be located at one of two sites near the state park’s northern boundary.²⁵¹ That idea quickly faded, and by August 1990 planners from the agency’s Denver Service Center (DSC) fueled with a \$385,000 Congressional appropriation—had begun work on a development concept plan (DCP) for the park’s so-called “South Slope.” By the end of 1990, DSC planners had concluded that the plan, still in its preliminary stages, would focus on visitor centers in Talkeetna and Denali State Park; it would also allow increased recreational access across the Chulitna River.²⁵²

In March 1991, NPS planners completed a draft environmental assessment that brought new controversy to the south slope development issue. That report, released in July, proposed a \$15 million,

Here federal and state planners visit one of the proposed southside visitor center sites offering this spectacular view of the Tokositna Glacier, Mt. McKinley and the main Alaska Range. Pictured in this 1995 photo, left to right, are J.D. Swed, South District Ranger; Dave Porter, Alaska State Parks; Bob Barbee, Alaska Regional Director; John Quinley, Public Information Officer; and Nancy Swanton, Park Planner. NPS Photo



14,000-square-foot visitor center on a bluff about a mile south of Talkeetna. The proposed visitor center was located next to a proposed 250-room, low-rise hotel; both were located on land owned by Cook Inlet Region, Inc., which was the Native regional corporation in that area.²⁵³ Talkeetna residents were relatively unconcerned about the proposed new hotel; one local shop owner said that the hotel was “a fantastic idea . . . we could absorb the number of guests they would bring in.” But there was widespread opposition to the visitor center, because it would bring an estimated 2,000 daily tourists to Talkeetna. Many local residents, who loved Talkeetna’s “small town charm,” railed against the “industrial tourism” (and the attendant tour bus traffic and “Disneyland atmosphere”) that the visitor center would bring. Given those fears, more than 500 residents signed a petition asking the agency to place the facility elsewhere. The NPS, for its part, recognized that the Talkeetna site was one of two eyed by agency planners; the other was the High Lake site (near the north end of Denali State Park) that the State of Alaska had proposed as part of its state park master planning effort. Park superintendent Russ Berry suggested that the Talkeetna site would be easier to get through the planning stages, inasmuch as the High Lake site “could face years of full-blown environmental impact studies to pass muster.” Public opinion, however, was key to the process. The public—which was apparently evenly divided according to one informal poll—was given until August 31 to give the NPS its opinions on the matter.²⁵⁴

For the next 18 months, NPS officials continued their work on the South Slope DCP. In

February 1992, the NPS issued an “alternatives workbook” for the plan. That workbook offered four alternatives, one or more of which recommended visitor centers at either Talkeetna, the Chulitna River crossing, at the north end of Denali State Park, or a site just north of the state park boundary. None of these alternatives recommended hotels, however, and the NPS noted that it had made no decisions regarding visitor centers or other improvements.²⁵⁵ In the midst of this process, a number of Talkeetna residents continued to protest the proposed Talkeetna-area visitor center, which was illustrated in just one alternative; in addition to previously stated concerns about the potential loss of their small-town character, one resident complained about “people who buy a package deal and really don’t spend any money locally,” while other local residents worried that their property taxes would be raised to cover increased sanitation, water, and other infrastructure improvements.²⁵⁶ But officials in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, by contrast, were generally in favor of the visitor center project; the Borough assembly had voiced its support for the project in a spring 1991 resolution. At a March 1992 assembly meeting in Palmer, just before the April 10 deadline for comments, the borough discussed the idea of placing an advisory vote on the project on the May ballot. But protests from Talkeetna residents, plus the dubious legality of orchestrating such a vote, resulted in the assembly backing away from that course of action.²⁵⁷ In late March 1992, the assembly held a meeting in Talkeetna, where a solid majority of the 140-plus attendees favored the project.²⁵⁸

A year later, in May 1993, the NPS finally released its draft South Slope Development Concept Plan. As it pertained to facilities development, the agency considered four alternatives: 1) no action, 2) a 16,000-square-foot Talkeetna-area visitor center, 3) a 16,000-square-foot visitor center at the north end of Denali State Park, and 4) the immediate construction of a 10,000-square-foot visitor center just north of the Chulitna River highway crossing, combined with the possible future construction of a 16,000-square-foot visitor center near Talkeetna. None of the alternatives proposed a new access road across the Chulitna, as DSC planners had considered in 1990; all three of the action-related alternatives, by contrast, recommended a new 30-50 site campground just south of Cantwell. Among the plan's four alternatives, the NPS chose the last as its proposed action. The public was originally given until September 17 to comment on the agency's draft plan; that deadline, however, was later extended to November 1.⁵⁹

Agency planners—who hailed from the Denver Service Center—quickly recognized that some Alaskans were opposed to the draft plan. Those most vehement in their opposition were Talkeetna-area residents, who loudly denounced any plan that included a visitor center or hotel in their midst. So strong was their opposition that park superintendent Russ Berry agreed to proceed no further with the south slope planning process; Berry, in fact, recalled the document and had a number of copies destroyed.⁶⁰

In an attempt to breathe new life into the planning process, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt stepped in. Babbitt, as noted above, had visited the park in mid-August 1993, and he was obviously concerned about the park's future. So he directed the NPS to study the matter in greater detail. The following March, agency director Roger Kennedy wrote that

Denali National Park, remote, wild and increasingly popular, should serve as a model park, to be emulated by others in the System, but a high degree of controversy within the State of Alaska has slowed progress toward this goal. The Secretary [therefore] wishes to convene a Committee of diverse individuals who can work together toward recommendations which, if implemented, can serve to resolve these seemingly intractable [sic] conflicts.

According to Kennedy's letter, this working group—which would report to the National

Park System Advisory Board—would be called the Denali National Park Committee. (It was later known, more informally, as the Denali Task Force.) This 16-member committee was chaired by Advisory Board member Loren Croxton, who hailed from Petersburg, Alaska. The South Slope was one of the three issues it was asked to decide; more specifically, the panel was asked to "review and make recommendations on a framework within which the Federal, State and Borough governments can jointly develop a regional recreation management plan."⁶¹ Given the Secretary's initiative, agency personnel deferred its planning efforts until after the Task Force completed its work. The Task Force completed its report in October 1994, and the full National Park System Advisory Board accepted its recommendations two months later. The report concluded that "all major landowners and interest groups"—including the two Native regional corporations as well as the federal, state, and borough governments—"must be involved in development planning to ensure that visitor centers, lodging and access improvements are coordinated, and conflicts and objectives are comprehensively addressed." The group recommended small visitor centers at three south slope sites (Tokositna, Byers Lake, and Talkeetna). And it further recommended that "lodging and other primarily commercial facilities should only be developed on private lands."⁶²

NPS planners positively responded to the Task Force report. For the time being, however, efforts to complete the South Slope Development Concept Plan were at a standstill. The process by which this plan was completed, and the ramifications of that plan, are discussed in Chapter 10.

- ¹ 64th Congress, Public 353 (February 26, 1917), Sections 5 and 6.
- ² Based on a 1945 judicial ruling after President Franklin Roosevelt had established Jackson Hole National Monument in Wyoming, Carter and his Interior Secretary, Cecil Andrus, felt that a detailed resource description was necessary to fend off any legal challenges based on their application of the Antiquities Act. See David H. Getches, "Managing the Public Lands: The Authority of the Executive to Withdraw Lands," *Natural Resources Journal* 22 (April 1982), 305; Hal Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts* (Champaign, Univ. of Illinois Press, March 1989), 216-20.
- ³ Proclamation 4616, December 1, 1978, as noted in the *Federal Register* 43 (December 5, 1978), 57035.
- ⁴ Public Law 96-487 (December 2, 1980), Section 202(3)(a).
- ⁵ As noted in Frank Williss's "*Do Things Right the First Time: The National Park Service and the Alaska National Interest Lands Act of 1980*," revised edition (Anchorage, NPS, February 2005), 133, NPS Director William Whalen hired Cook as Area Director (in late 1978) under the condition that Cook would have the latitude and authority of a regional director, and that as soon as an Alaska lands bill passed, he would receive that designation.
- ⁶ Williss, "*Do Things Right the First Time*," 149, 152f7; NPS, *Historic Listing of National Park Service Officials*, May 1, 1986, 75, 153.
- ⁷ NPS, *Historic Listing*, 153; Robert C. Cunningham, interview by the author, October 13, 2004.
- ⁸ U.S. Department of the Interior, *Budget Justifications, National Park Service*, various years.
- ⁹ *Federal Register* 43 (December 26, 1978), 60251-58; *Federal Register* 44 (June 28, 1979), 37731-51.
- ¹⁰ *Federal Register* 46 (January 19, 1981), 5643.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5641-65; *Federal Register* 46 (June 17, 1981), 31835-64; Frank Norris, *Alaska Subsistence: a National Park Service Management History* (Anchorage, NPS, 2002), 88-92.
- ¹² Cunningham interview, October 13, 2004.
- ¹³ In July 1975 the newly-completed highway between Anchorage and Fairbanks was renamed to honor George Parks, a former Alaska Governor (1925-33), surveyor, and General Land Office administrator. See Alaska Northwest, *The Milepost* (Anchorage, the author, 1985), 217.
- ¹⁴ *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 16, 1981, A-1, A-3. Judith Guevara and Maria Elena Garfros de Silva, both from Mexico City, died at the scene, while Margaret Chappell of Little Rock, Arkansas died in Fairbanks. One or two others may have died later, however; a June 17 *Anchorage Daily Times* editorial (p. A-10) noted that four had died in the accident, and a June 21, 1983 *Times* article (p. B-2) noted five deaths.
- ¹⁵ After June 1981, tour bus traffic has generally gone west to Stony Hill (on clear days) or to an area, known as the "soapberry patch," on the east side of the Toklat River (on days without a McKinley view). In 1990, the cloudy-day turnaround point shifted to a cleared area just west of the Toklat River and just north of the park road. Steve Carwile interview, July 27, 2006.
- ¹⁶ *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 17, 1981, A-1, A-3, A-10; June 19, 1981, A-1, A-3; "Memorandum in Support of Motion for Summary Judgment" in *ARA Services, Inc., et al. v. U.S.* (F83-011 Civil), 1.
- ¹⁷ *ARA Services, et al. v. U.S.* (F83-011 Civil) in Alaska District Court was decided in the government's favor on May 28, 1986. The concessioner, however, asked the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals to review the case, and in 1987 the Circuit Court reversed the District Court's decision. See *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 21, 1983, B-2; SAR, 1987, 7.
- ¹⁸ Federal Highway Administration, *McKinley Park Highway, 1978 Study Report, McKinley Park Station to Wonder Lake*, 2-12; NPS, Pacific Northwest Region, *Road Surface Treatment Planning Analysis, Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska*, February 1, 1979, 3-4.
- ¹⁹ Federal Highway Administration, *Road Inventory and Needs Study, Mount McKinley National Park*, 1980, Study 184/D-47, TIC Collection; NPS, *Park Road Rehabilitation Program, DENA, Environmental Assessment* (Denver, the author, February 1982), 1, 9-10.
- ²⁰ *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 23, 1981, B-1.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, June 23, 1981, B-1.
- ²² NPS, *Environmental Assessment for Park Road Rehabilitation Program*, 21-22.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 22-32, 55-62. The possible paving of the park road was also considered, and rejected, in a road corridor planning effort that concluded just a month after the road rehabilitation program report. NPS, *Development Concept Plan, Park Road Corridor, DENA, Environmental Assessment* (Denver, the author, March 1982), 95-99.
- ²⁴ SAR, 1982, 3; Cunningham interview, October 13, 2004.
- ²⁵ John E. Cook to Manager, Denver Service Center, December 9, 1981, in Roads files, DENA.
- ²⁶ This act passed Congress on December 23, 1982; President Reagan signed it on January 6, 1983, and it became Public Law 97-424.

- ³⁷ James N. Hall (FHWA) to Denis P. Galvin (DSC), May 2, 1983, in Roads files, DENA; Stanley T. Albright to Russell Dickenson (Director NPS), July 9, 1984, in preface to NPS, *Park Road Standards*, July 1984.
- ³⁸ Federal Highway Administration, *DNP Route 10, Denali National Park, Road Improvement Study from State Route 3 to Kantishna* (draft), May 1983, 1, 6a, 21. Page 6a was inserted during the review period after the completion of the May 1983 study.
- ³⁹ NPS, *Park Road Standards*, July 1984, 29.
- ⁴⁰ Robert Cunningham to Director DSC, June 15, 1983; Jerald M. Lorenz to Assistant Manager, DSC, July 5, 1983; Kenneth Raithel, Jr. to Director ARO, July 13, 1983; all in Roads files, DENA; Federal Highway Administration, *DNP Route 10, Denali National Park, Road Improvement Study from State Route 3 to Kantishna* (final), February 1984. The final report was identical to the draft except for the insertion of page 6a and Appendix G.
- ⁴¹ Acting Regional Director, ARO to Manager, DSC, September 30, 1983, in Roads files, DENA.
- ⁴² FHWA, *Feasibility Study for Upgrading the Denali Park Road at Sable Pass, Polychrome Pass and Eielson Bluffs*, preliminary draft, 1985, in DENA Roads files; Brad Ebel email, March 14, 2007.
- ⁴³ SAR, 1982, 3; SAR, 1983, 1; Cunningham to Jack O'Neale (Maintenance General Foreman), August 14, 1985, in "Rehab Program/Pits" section of "Road Rehabilitation" 3-ring binder, Joe Van Horn Collection, DENA.
- ⁴⁴ SAR, 1986, 4; NPS, *Environmental Assessment for Park Road Rehabilitation Program*, 28-31.
- ⁴⁵ FHWA, *Bridge Inspection Reports* (various), June 1980 (TIC 184/D7A-24A), NPS, *Road Surface Treatment Planning Analysis*, 6; SAR, 1980, 6.
- ⁴⁶ SAR, 1973, 8; Donald F. Bolton, *Status Report for Savage River Bridge, MOMC, National Park Route NP 1-A* (Juneau, FHWA), November 1970, TIC 184/D129; FHWA, *Study Report No. 2, Savage River Bridge, NPS Route 1-A, MOMC, Alaska*, 1980, TIC 184/D44.
- ⁴⁷ NPS, *Savage River Bridge Replacement, Environmental Assessment* (Denver, NPS), March 1981, TIC 184/1742.
- ⁴⁸ SAR, 1983, 1. Bridges were replaced over six small creeks east of Savage River as well as Hogan Creek (mile 21.7), Betty's Brook (mile 63.2), and Lake Creek (mile 88.5). Source: various FHWA bridge inspection reports, in DENA TIC Collection.
- ⁴⁹ SAR, 1987, 3; NPS, *Environmental Assessment, Replace Toklat River and Moose Creek Bridges* (Denver, the author), June 1985.
- ⁵⁰ Federal Highway Administration, *Bridge Inspection Reports* for various Denali Park Road bridges, June 2007. Of the 12 major bridges in the park, the shortest estimated remaining life was Rock Creek (20 years); at the other extreme, four bridges had a predicted 50-year estimated lifetime.
- ⁵¹ Public Law 96-487 (December 2, 1980), Sec. 1301(a). Sec. 604(b) of the National Parks and Recreation Act (Public Law 95-625), passed on November 10, 1978, stated that general management plans for each of its units needed to be "prepared and revised in a timely manner," while Sec. 1301 of ANILCA specifically asked that these plans be completed by December 1985. *U.S. Statutes at Large*, vol. 92 (1978), p. 3518 and vol. 94 (1980), p. 2472.
- ⁵² SAR, 1980, 1; NPS, "Task Directive for the Preparation of a General Management Plan for Mount McKinley National Park/Denali National Monument," May 30, 1980, in "D18 - Planning Programs and Master Plans, 1979-80" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.
- ⁵³ NPS, *Supplement to Interim Development Concept Plan, Headquarters/Hotel Area* (Denver, the author, February 1981), 1.
- ⁵⁴ George S. Stroud, *History of the Concession at Denali National Park (formerly Mount McKinley National Park)*, unpub. mss. (Anchorage, NPS, March 1985), 22, 26-32.
- ⁵⁵ NPS, *Supplement to Interim Development Concept Plan, Headquarters/Hotel Area*, 2.
- ⁵⁶ SAR, 1980, 2.
- ⁵⁷ Stroud, *History of the Concession*, 33; NPS, *Supplement to the Interim Development Concept Plan, Headquarters/Hotel Area*, 7-16; SAR, 1980, 2, 4. The need to replace the bus barn and employee dining room, and alternatives on where they should be located, were also addressed in the agency's *Environmental Assessment, Bus Maintenance Facility / Employee Dining Facility, Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska* (Denver, NPS), February 1981.
- ⁵⁸ *Federal Register* 46 (March 13, 1981), 16737; *Federal Register* 46 (April 1, 1981), 19859-60.
- ⁵⁹ Stroud, *History of the Concession*, 28, 33; Robert Cunningham interview.
- ⁶⁰ Stroud, *History of the Concession*, 28. In 1982, the NPS awarded a \$1.2 million contract for Denali shuttle-bus service that summer to Burton-Carver Transportation Inc. of Soldotna; the following year that contract was renewed for \$992,000. SAR, 1982, 3; *Anchorage Daily Times*, May 14, 1983, B-2. Other bus contractors during the 1980s and early 1990s included Transportation and Marketing Service (or Systems), Tundra Tours, Mayflower Contract Services, and Laidlaw Transit. SAR, 1987, 8; SAR, 1988, 1; Ralph Tingey interview, May 17, 2006; Steve Carwile interview, May 25, 2006 and May 3, 2007.

⁸¹ The only known exceptions to the concessioner's monopoly on park tours during the pre-ANILCA period were the various mountaineering guide services on Mt. McKinley and other Alaska Range peaks (see Chapter 13), plus Camp Denali's tradition of conducting hikes at various locations toward the western end of the park road. Camp Denali's hikes, which began during the 1950s, technically violated the terms of the park concessions contract, but they were freely tolerated because they had no discernable impact on the concessioner's profitability. Language in ANILCA's Section 1307(a) has allowed Camp Denali to continue those hikes in recent years.

⁸² See ANILCA (P.L. 96-487), Sec. 1307; *U.S. Statutes at Large* 94 (1980), 2479-80.

⁸³ NPS, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory, Alaska Region*, annual issues, 1981 to 1995. The development of the CUL system in 1980-81 is discussed in Frank Norris's *Tourism in Katmai Country* (Anchorage, NPS, 1992), 137-38.

⁸⁴ NPS, *Development Concept Plan, Park Road Corridor, Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska, Environmental Assessment* (Denver, the author, March 1982), 3.

⁸⁵ SAR, 1982, 3; NPS, *DCP, Park Road Corridor, EA*, 35-67.

⁸⁶ NPS, *DCP, Park Road Corridor, EA*, 52-57. Teklanika Campground was the only site beyond Savage River that allowed recreational vehicle camping.

⁸⁷ NPS, *Development Concept Plan, Park Road Corridor, Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska* (Denver, the author, February 1983), 92-93.

⁸⁸ SAR, 1983, 3; NPS, *Development Concept Plan, Park Road Corridor, Environmental Assessment*, 55-57; NPS, *Development Concept Plan, Park Road Corridor*, 54-55.

⁸⁹ Stroud, *History of the Concession*, 33-34; SAR, 1982, 1; 1983, 1-2.

⁹⁰ Williss, "Do Things Right the First Time," 150.

⁹¹ The draft GMP for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve was completed in May 1982 and finalized in August 1984; for Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve in April 1983 and September 1984; for Kenai Fjords National Park in May 1983 and June 1984; and for Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve in September 1983 and January 1985.

⁹² SAR, 1983, 3; SAR, 1984, 2; NPS, *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Assessment, Land Protection Plan, Wilderness Suitability Review, DENA* (Denver, the author, March 1985), 125.

⁹³ NPS, *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Assessment*, 9, 76-77.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10. The reference to "250,000 people per year" on page 10 was a misprint, instead, it should have read "25,000 people per year" for ten years, thus allowing for an additional 250,000 people. Also see NPS, *General Management Plan, Land Protection Plan, Wilderness Suitability Review, DENA* (Denver, the author, November 1986), 145.

⁹⁵ This study, in its present form, was entitled "Wildlife Viewing and the Mandatory Public Transportation System in Denali National Park" (1984). It was later published as "The Controlled Traffic System and Associated Wildlife Responses in Denali National Park," *Arctic* 39 (September 1986), 195-203.

⁹⁶ NPS, *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Assessment*, 13, 15.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁹⁹ NPS, *Draft GMPIEA*, 19-20, 146-50; Alaska Division of Parks, *Alaska State Park System: Southcentral Region Plan*, February 1982, 65. The NPS voiced its support for the Curry Ridge site, the state's similar preference was an apparent outgrowth of recent Tokositna Project feasibility study (see Chapter 8) to include Curry Ridge. By 1985, both the state and federal governments felt that a major development site near Tokositna Glacier "appears impractical."

¹⁰⁰ *Anchorage Daily News*, October 30, 1984, C-1, C-3; *Anchorage Daily Times*, November 13, 1984, A-10; NPS, *Draft GMPIEA*, 20-25.

¹⁰¹ Meetings were held June 3 in Fairbanks; June 4 in Healy; June 6 in Talkeetna; and June 12 in Anchorage.

¹⁰² SAR for Katmai National Park and Preserve, 1985, 2; *Anchorage Times*, December 7, 1985, A-4; *Anchorage Daily News*, December 7, 1985, C-2. The State of Alaska's response was more than one hundred pages long, and the Alaska Land Use Council (a consultative body that had been established by Sec. 1201 of ANILCA) spent considerable time deliberating the various plans. Sandy Rabinowitch interview, April 17, 2006.

¹⁰³ NPS, *General Management Plan, Land Protection Plan, Wilderness Suitability Review, Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska, revised draft* (Anchorage, the author, December 1985), 14. The revised draft, oddly, stated higher 1984 traffic volumes than was shown in the initial draft; this recalibration thus allowed the number of buses at "full plan implementation" to be 10.6% higher than it would have been otherwise.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 20-21, 27; NPS, *General Management Plan*, November 1986, iii. Ironically, the revised draft makes no mention of these two changes, but the final [November 1986] GMP, in its master list of changes, makes these assertions.

¹⁰⁵ NPS, *Draft GMP* (March 1985) and *Revised Draft GMP* (December 1985), inside front cover.

¹⁰⁶ NPS, *General Management Plan*, November 1986, v, 17.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 22, 29.

⁷⁸ SAR, 1986, 1; 1987, 8; *Anchorage Daily News*, January 16, 1987, D-10.

⁷⁹ While many agency documents, including various issues of the *National Park Index*, stated that the "old park" contained 1,900,000 acres of wilderness, the agency's final wilderness recommendations (in September 1988, p. 10) stated that of 2,214,273 acres in the "old park," 2,124,783 acres (96%) was designated wilderness.

⁸⁰ NPS, *Draft General Management Plan (DENA)*, March 1985, 69-71.

⁸¹ NPS, *General Management Plan (DENA)*, revised draft, December 1985, 89-95.

⁸² NPS, *General Management Plan (DENA)*, November 1986, 109-15.

⁸³ NPS, *Final Environmental Impact Statement, Wilderness Recommendation, Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska* (Denver, the author, September 1988), 10.

⁸⁴ SAR, 1987, 4.

⁸⁵ "Summary Chart: National Park Service, Alaska Wilderness Proposals;" Richard J. Stenmark to Director NPS, May 23, 1988, both in Judy Alderson files, AKRO; *Anchorage Daily Times*, March 4, 1988, B-8.

⁸⁶ NPS, *Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Wilderness Recommendation, Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska* (Denver, the author, June 1988), vii, 6, 20; NPS, *Final Wilderness EIS, DENA* (September 1988), 143, 187-89.

⁸⁷ NPS, *Draft EIS, Wilderness Recommendation*, iii.

⁸⁸ NPS, *Final EIS*, 14, 20-24, 66-79; Boyd Evison to Director NPS, November 10, 1988, in Judy Alderson files, AKRO; William P. Mott, "Record of Decision," December 1, 1988, document 184/88-43A, TIC Collection; Judy Alderson interview, May 2, 2006.

⁸⁹ Joe Van Horn to author, email, May 11, 2006; NPS, *General Management Plan, DENA*, November 1986, 60-61.

⁹⁰ NPS, *Final GMP, DENA*, November 1986, 72, 76-77, 80-81.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 98-101; NPS, *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study Report* (Anchorage, the author, December 1984), xiii; State of Alaska, Fourteenth Legislature, Legislative Resolve No. 4. SJR 3 was introduced by Senator Bettye Fahrenkamp (D-Fairbanks) on January 14, 1985; the resolution was ratified with Governor William Sheffield's signature on February 25. *Alaska Senate Bill History, 1985-1986*, p. 207.

⁹² NPS, "Meeting on NPS/State Land Exchange, DENA Headquarters" (attendance sheet), February 22, 1982, in "Public Lands: Lands Acquisition (1950-1990)" folder, Box 32, Denali Administrative Records Collection (DARC), DENA Archives; *Anchorage Times*, August 13, 1982, B-6; *New York Times*, September 1, 1982, 17; Frank Norris, *Legacy of the Gold Rush: An Administrative History of Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park* (Anchorage, NPS, 1996), 314-15; Joe Van Horn interview, April 20, 2007.

⁹³ NPS, *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study Report*, 58-66, 81-87.

⁹⁴ Senate Joint Resolution 3, in *Alaska Senate Bill History, 1985-86*, 207; various correspondence in "Public Lands: Lands Acquisition (1950-1990)" file, Box 32, DARC.

⁹⁵ Geoffrey L. Haskett to RD, Alaska Region, October 5, 1987; Garey E. Coatney to Steve Carwile, November 12, 1987; Coatney to John Neill, November 12, 1987; all in "Public Lands: Lands Acquisition, 1950-1990" file, Box 32, DARC.

⁹⁶ National Parks and Conservation Association, *Park Boundaries: Where We Draw the Line* (Washington, D.C., the author, February 1988), 508-09.

⁹⁷ Norris, *Alaska Subsistence*, 59, 89-90.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*; ANILCA (P.L. 96-487), Sec. 202(3)(a).

⁹⁹ Norris, *Alaska Subsistence*, 90-94, 98-101.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 103. Each of the seven subsistence resource commissions had nine members; three appointed by the Interior Secretary (who delegated this responsibility to the NPS), three by the Alaska governor, and three by the appropriate Regional Advisory Council. Ralph Tingey, an assistant to Superintendent Cunningham, played a key role in the appointment of federally-appointed members to the Denali SRC. Ralph Tingey interview, April 26, 2006.

¹⁰¹ Norris, *Alaska Subsistence*, 103-04; Tingey interview.

¹⁰² Norris, *Alaska Subsistence*, 104. The draft Denali GMP, released in March 1985, omitted subsistence concerns almost entirely; the final GMP released in November 1986, by contrast, contained a four-page "Subsistence Management" section plus an additional subsection related to "Contemporary Native American Concerns."

¹⁰³ Norris, *Alaska Subsistence*, 105, 281.

¹⁰⁴ Ray Collins is the current SRC chair. Norris's *Alaska Subsistence* notes the major issues over the years in which the Denali SRC has been involved.

¹⁰⁵ The agency's 1974 snowmobile regulation was implemented in conformance with sections 3 and 4 of Executive Order 11644, which was signed by President Nixon on February 8, 1972. It followed the January

1974 publication of a final environmental statement on the impacts of off-road vehicle use on the public lands. *Federal Register* 39 (April 1, 1974), 11882-83; Daniel Kuehn interview, October 11, 2004. The NPS's administrative record for a 1999 snowmobile lawsuit (*Alaska State Snowmobile Association, Inc. v. Babbitt*, in *Federal Supplement, 2nd Series*, Vol. 79 [November 8, 1999], p. 1122) mistakenly stated that the park's snowmobile prohibition had been implemented in 1972.

¹⁰⁶ Norris, *Alaska Subsistence*, 61, 137; Alaska Planning Group, *Final Environmental Statement, Proposed Mount McKinley National Park Additions, Alaska* (Washington?, U.S. Interior Department, October 1974), 123, 128. The APG at this time, did not state whether "snowmobiling" was an established form of subsistence hunting elsewhere in Alaska.

¹⁰⁷ Proclamation 4616, as noted in *Federal Register* 43 (December 5, 1978), 57035.

¹⁰⁸ *Federal Register* 44 (June 28, 1979), 37737-38. In 1978 and 1979, the NPS revised its agencywide snowmobile policy, but inasmuch as "snowmobile use in Alaskan park areas will be managed under Special Regulations which are currently being developed," officials stated that the revised policy would apply only to the "coterminous United States." *Federal Register* 44 (August 13, 1979), 47412-13.

¹⁰⁹ Public Law 96-487, Sec. 811(b); *U.S. Statutes at Large*, vol. 94 (1980), p. 2428.

¹¹⁰ P.L. 96-487, Sec. 202(3)(a) and Section 1110(a); *U.S. Statutes at Large*, vol. 94 (1980), 2382 and 2464-65.

¹¹¹ *Federal Register* 46 (June 17, 1981), 31841, 31861.

¹¹² Steve Carwile interview, October 19, 2006. A copy of the draft regulation is in Mr. Carwile's files.

¹¹³ *Federal Register* 48 (April 6, 1983), 14978-79; Anchorage Daily Times, April 6, 1983, B-12.

¹¹⁴ *Anchorage Daily News*, April 17, 1983, C-1; April 25, 1983, A-18; April 30, 1983, B-6.

¹¹⁵ *Federal Register* 48 (June 7, 1983), 26319; *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 7, 1983, B-5.

¹¹⁶ Executive Order 11644 (February 8, 1972), in *Federal Register* 37 (1972), 2877; NPS, *General Management Plan, DENA*, November 1986, 33-34, 45. The GMP also noted that only snowmachines, motorboats, and dog teams were "authorized means of access for subsistence use" in Denali National Park and Preserve. Other forms of transportation, whose "traditional" role had not been proved, were not allowed.

¹¹⁷ Ralph Tingey, interview with the author, May 16, 2006. Several snowmachines entered the "old park" in 1987, and in 1993, the park superintendent glumly noted that "mechanized intrusions into the Denali wilderness continue but the necessary tools, both in the field and regulatory, are sorely lacking." See SAR, 1987, 6; SAR, 1993, 5-6.

¹¹⁸ Supt. Dan Kuehn, in his October 11, 2004 interview, noted that he and his wife, Kate, served as chaperones for Tri-Valley's basketball team during the mid-1970s.

¹¹⁹ See Library of Congress website, <http://thomas.loc.gov>, "Bill Summary and Status" link. The various Alaska Railroad provisions were folded into H.R. 3420, the primary purpose of which was to appropriate funds to comply with the Natural Gas Pipeline Safety Act of 1968 and the Hazardous Liquid Pipeline Safety Act of 1979. This bill was sponsored by Rep. Glenn Anderson (D-Calif.). See *Congressional Record* 128 (1982), pp. 3315T-54, 33274-81, 33594-95.

¹²⁰ The bill became Public Law 97-468. This law has been called the Alaska Railroad Transfer Act, but Alaska-related provisions are contained only in Title VI. The 12th Alaska legislature (1981-82) put forth several resolutions—including SJR 28, SJR 69, SJR 76, and SJR 77—that attempted to influence the evolving legislation. All failed. *Alaska Senate Bill History, 1981-1982, passim*.

¹²¹ "Alaska Railroad – History" web page (www.akrr.com/arrc119.html).

¹²² *Congressional Record* 128 (1982), pp. 33152, 33275, and 33282-83; 97th Congress, 2nd Session, Senate Report 97-479 (June 22, 1982), 15; "Running the Rails in Alaska," *National Parks* 56 (September/October 1982), 33; Alaska Railroad, "Memorandum of Rental Agreement" (Contract No. 69-25-0003-5165), April 14, 1980, in "Front Misc." file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives; Raymond C. Kremer to Alaska Railroad Corp., May 1, 1986, in "Misc." file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.

¹²³ *Anchorage Daily News*, December 29, 1988, C-1, C-2.

¹²⁴ *Anchorage Daily News*, October 29, 1989, M-11 to M-13.

¹²⁵ *Anchorage Daily News*, January 2, 1990, B-1, B-3; January 5, 1990, A-3.

¹²⁶ Alaska Department of Labor, *Alaska Population Overview, 1990 Census and Estimates* (Juneau?, July 1991), 132-33; Denali Borough web page (www.denaliborough.com), "Ordinances" link.

¹²⁷ Usibelli Coal Mine web page, "History" link (www.usibelli.com/chron.html).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*; *Anchorage Daily News*, December 17, 1991, B-4.

¹²⁹ *Anchorage Daily News*, April 29, 1990, C-1.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Anchorage Daily News*, March 6, 1991, D-1, D-5; April 7, 1991, E-2; www.usibelli.com/chron.html.

¹³² *Anchorage Daily News*, December 17, 1991, B-4; February 28, 1992, G-1, G-2, March 23, 1992, C-1, C-6; July 10, 1992, F-1, F-3.

¹³³ *Anchorage Daily News*, September 5, 1992, A-1.

¹³⁴ *Federal Register* 58 (February 11, 1993), 8058-59.

- ¹⁰⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, December 17, 1993, D-1, D-8; *Federal Register* 59 (March 21, 1994), 13310-17; "Agreement Will Shield Denali from Pollution," *National Parks* 68 (January-February 1994), 13-14, 16.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Anchorage Daily News*, March 16, 1994, D-1, D-2; June 3, 1994, A-1, A-12; July 5, 1996, E-1, E-2; "Usibelli Coal Mine History" website, cited above.
- ¹¹⁰ Steve Carwile interview, January 16, 2007.
- ¹¹¹ Denali Foundation web page (www.denali.org); Robert Cunningham, interview by the author, October 13, 2004; Clay Cunningham, *Yellowstone to Denali: Bears, Bison, Poachers, Thieves and Other Characters* (Denver, Outskirts Press, 2005), 128-31.
- ¹¹² Willie Karadis, email to Jill Boelsma, May 29, 2006.
- ¹¹³ Cunningham, *Yellowstone to Denali*, 128-31; Karadis to Boelsma email, May 29, 2006; Tricia Brown, "Hostel Takeover," *Alaska Magazine* 63 (February 1997), 45-49.
- ¹¹⁴ Steve Carwile email, January 22, 2007.
- ¹¹⁵ SAR, 1985, 2; SAR, 1986, 3; Robert Cunningham interview, October 13, 2004. As noted in Chapter 13, the medical presence was a continuation of services that doctors had offered on the slopes of Mt. McKinley since 1982. Cunningham advertised for the headquarters position in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.
- ¹¹⁶ SAR, 1987, 7; SAR, 1991, 6; SAR, 1993, 5; SAR, 1995, 9.
- ¹¹⁷ A few injuries were also the result of criminal activity; see, for example, *Anchorage Daily News*, August 21, 1992, B-1; August 8, 2001, B-1.
- ¹¹⁸ SAR, 1980, 2; SAR, 1983, 1; SAR, 1984, 1; *The Milepost*, various annual issues; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 13, 1989, F-8. Inasmuch as no other known motels were built in the Parks Highway commercial strip before 1987, the superintendent's 1983 description of two "24-unit motels" apparently refers to the new (1979-1980) units added to the McKinley Chalets. The tourist cabins were the Denali Crow's Nest Log Cabins.
- ¹¹⁹ NPS, *Final GMP, DENA*, November 1986, 15; SAR, DENA, 1986, 1; SAR, DENA, 1987, 5.
- ¹²⁰ Ralph Tingey, interview with the author, May 17, 2006. Mr. Tingey noted that the traffic target was met by requiring Kantishna-area lodge guests to use lodge buses rather than their private vehicles; by requiring Toklat-area NPS employees to ride a bus to and from the hotel area; and by asking certain private-vehicle operators to drive the park road at night, when traffic volumes were low.
- ¹²¹ SAR, DENA, for 1985, 1; 1986, 1; 1987, 4; 1988, 1; Ralph Tingey interview, May 18, 2006. Don Hummel, in his *Stealing the National Parks*, p. 313, cited a 1986 newspaper article in which ranger-naturalist Kim Heacox stated, with a dash of hyperbole, that "visitors were turned away at Denali last summer."
- ¹²² SAR, DENA, 1989, 3; SAR, DENA, 1991, 1-2.
- ¹²³ In 1986, this facility was known as the Kantishna Road House and Bush Camp, but by 1988 it was known simply as the Kantishna Roadhouse. Today's visitor facility is just yards away from the original (1919) Kantishna Roadhouse. NPS, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory, Alaska Region*, 1986 and 1988 editions; SAR, DENA, 1987, 6; Bill Sherwonit, "No Going Back," *Alaska Magazine* 56 (April 1990), 68. As noted in the June 15, 1990 *Anchorage Daily News*, pp. C-1 and C-3, Wilson and fellow Kantishna landowner Dan Ashbrook had business interests (including the management of this property) that began in 1976 and ended in February 1988 with a settlement agreement separating Ashbrook from all tour operations. Also see "Settlement Agreement" in *Wilson, et al. v. Ashbrook et al.*, Case 4FA-88-67, February 23, 1988.
- ¹²⁴ North Face Lodge owner Gary Crabb died on April 17, 1987. On September 25 of that year, his widow Linda Crabb sold the parcel to Wallace and Jerryne Cole, who had owned nearby Camp Denali since 1975. The Coles still own both properties. In early 1987, the lodge's capacity was still just 15 guests; the Coles' renovations apparently added only a small number to that total. *Anchorage Daily News*, April 24, 1987; transfer deed in AKRO Lands Division files; Steve Carwile interview, April 24, 2006; "Caribou, Tundra, Whitewater, Mount McKinley ... Alaska Adventures," *Sunset* 178 (June 1987), 74.
- ¹²⁵ NPS, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory*, various issues, 1990-91; Sherwonit, "No Going Back," 70; Alaska Denali Tours web page (<http://www.alaskadenalitours.com>).
- ¹²⁶ Ralph Tingey interview, May 17, 2006.
- ¹²⁷ SAR, 1988, 2; SAR, 1989, 2; NPS, "Basic Park Issues, DENA, 1989," attachment to SAR, 1989; Steve Carwile to Jack Morehead memo, June 3, 1994, in Carwile files. As noted above and in Chapter 8, University of Alaska researcher Diane C. Tracy had researched this problem between 1973 and 1975, while Joan Beattie and Frank Singer had updated that study during the summers of 1983 and 1984. See SAR, 1973, 8; SAR, 1974, 5; SAR, 1975, 4; SAR, 1983, 2; SAR, 1984, 2; Tracy, "Human-Wildlife Interactions Along Mt. McKinley Road," in Alaska Cooperative Park Studies Unit, *Final Report: Fiscal Year 1975* (Fairbanks, UAF, 1975), 1, 4, 6, T-1 through T-85; Beattie and Singer, "Wildlife Viewing and the Mandatory Public Transportation System in Denali National Park" (1984).
- ¹²⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, January 24, 1990, C-1, C-3; SAR, 1989, 1-2; SAR, 1990, 2-3.
- ¹²⁹ Jane Bryant email, November 6 and November 22, 2006; Steve Carwile email, November 6, 2006. The half-marathon has been run each August since its inception. Founder Denise Taylor sold the Denali Fruit Express in 2001.

⁷⁹⁵ Phyllis Motsko to Jane Bryant email, February 22, 2007; Jane Bryant to author email, March 6, 2007. Mike Cobbold, who as the concessioner's transportation manager played a key role in developing the tour, noted that Superintendent Cunningham "received pressure about the tour" after its 1986 approval, this pressure, regardless of its origin, may have played a role in delaying the tour's implementation.

⁷⁹⁶ Ralph Tingey interview, May 17, 2006.

⁷⁹⁷ SAR, 1973, 3; SAR, 1974, 2; SAR, 1975, 3.

⁷⁹⁸ As noted in the discussion of park entrance fees (see section below), these fees were implemented beginning in 1988. Congress, however, offset the budgetary benefit of entrance fees with cutbacks elsewhere, thus resulting in the same level of funding with which to operate the park's shuttle bus system.

⁷⁹⁹ SAR, 1991, 2-3.

⁸⁰⁰ The Concessions Policy Act (Public Law 89-249, enacted October 9, 1965) called for the renegotiation, each five years, of each concessioner's franchise fee.

⁸⁰¹ SAR, 1993, 3; NPS, *Environmental Assessment on the Proposed Construction of Visitor Transportation System Facilities, Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska* (November 1994), 1, 5. The bus fee, though quite high compared to what passengers had paid previously, was set in the contract to be sufficiently low so as to "not allow ARA to fully recover its operational and administrative costs associated with the system." A later report noted that the fully-amortized cost of a bus trip in 1995-96 would be \$42—more than twice the cost of the proposed bus ticket cost. *Anchorage Daily News*, July 13, 1994, A-8.

⁸⁰² SAR, 1993, 8; NPS, *Environmental Assessment on the Proposed Construction of Visitor Transportation System Facilities*, 1, 5.

⁸⁰³ *Anchorage Daily News*, July 13, 1994, A-1, A-8; "NPCA and Others Fault Denali Bus Contract," *National Parks* 68 (September/October 1994), 19-20.

⁸⁰⁴ SAR, 1995, 1, 4-5, 12-13; *Anchorage Daily News*, September 2, 1994, E-1, E-4; Jeannie Woodring, "Bussing Denali," *Alaska Business Monthly* 10 (November 1994), 10. In 1994, the operation of the Denali concession changed from ARA Leisure Services, Inc. to Aramark Sports and Leisure. The park concessioner was doing business as Denali Park Resorts, both before and after the name change. The company's first park concession had been at Shenandoah National Park (Virginia) in 1972. See www.aramark.com, "about/history" link; Charlie Ess, "Vacationing at Denali," *Alaska Business Monthly* 15 (August 1999), 29.

⁸⁰⁵ *Anchorage Daily News*, May 14, 1995, M-1. The concessioner, at first, had hoped to run the 48-passenger buses all the way out to Wonder Lake and dispense with the need for 40-passenger buses. A state highway official, however, protested that 48-passenger buses caused significantly more wear to the road surface than 40-passenger buses. In addition, an early-season test of the 48-passenger buses caused the park superintendent to conclude that they should not be used west of Eielson Visitor Center. *Anchorage Daily News*, July 13, 1994, A-8.

⁸⁰⁶ As noted in Appendix A, recreational visitation to Denali dropped from 558,870 in 1991 to 490,311 in 1994.

⁸⁰⁷ NPS, "Fees to be Charged Beginning in 1995 for Denali N.P. Shuttle Buses" (news release), June 6, 1994, in John Quinley files, AKRO. Berry reasoned that the key GMP data—in Table 1 on page 17—should be interpreted to state that the 20 percent increase allowed in stage 3 of the traffic plan should be on top of the 15 percent allowed in stage 1. Berry, "An Analysis of Bus Numbers, or How We Got Here," June 19, 1994, in Steve Carwile files.

⁸⁰⁸ *Anchorage Daily Times*, October 2, 1979, 4; October 4, 1979, A-3. The bill that Stevens amended was H.R. 5419, which dealt with the Appalachian Trail and also authorized Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site in Massachusetts.

⁸⁰⁹ Public Law 96-487 (December 2, 1980), Sec. 203; 94 Stat. 2384. According to Frank Williss's ANILCA history ("*Do Things Right the First Time*", p. 128/fn 186), the entrance-fee issue was one of several "technical or perfecting" changes that were resolved between the House and Senate bills in the days immediately before President Carter signed the final bill.

⁸¹⁰ *Anchorage Daily News*, August 23, 1983, A-12; *Anchorage Daily Times*, March 23, 1984, A-10.

⁸¹¹ [Interior] Secretary [Donald Hodel] to Honorable Thomas P. O'Neill [draft]; James T. Christy to David A. Stockman, February 7, 1985; both in "Denali National Park/User Fees" folder, DENA Archives.

⁸¹² *Hawaii Tribune-Herald*, July 10, 1986, 1, 12.

⁸¹³ P.L. 100-203, Title V, Part F, Subtitle C, in www.thomas.loc.gov; SAR, 1987, 5; Cunningham interview, October 13, 2004.

⁸¹⁴ SAR, 1988, 1; SAR 1991, 6; SAR, 1993, 5; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 12, 1994, M-2.

⁸¹⁵ Examples of these articles include the following: *Anchorage Daily Times*, August 30, 1974, 8; September 11, 1974, 47; April 22, 1976, 17; September 3, 1976, 21; Tom Walker, "Season's End in McKinley Park," *Alaska Magazine* 43 (October 1977), 93.

⁸¹⁶ See the *Anchorage Daily Times*, October 1, 1981, D-1; September 4, 1983, B-3; September 3, 1984, B-3; September 5, 1984, C-1; *Anchorage Daily News*, September 11, 1980, B-1; September 16, 1980, H-10; September 11, 1983, F-1; May 17, 1984, F-13.

- ¹⁷⁹ *Anchorage Daily News*, September 14, 1986, B-3. September 8, a week after Labor Day, was in keeping with the evolving general management plan, which stated that the shuttle bus system would operate “into the fall for as long as visitor use remains high.”
- ¹⁸⁰ *Anchorage Daily News*, September 14, 1986, B-1, B-3; August 26, 1990, K-5.
- ¹⁸¹ *Anchorage Daily News*, September 14, 1986, B-3; SAR, 1987, 5. A year later (*Anchorage Daily News*, September 13, 1987, J-1), an NPS official stated that the crowd on September 13, 1986 numbered 900 cars, not 500 as she had noted in 1986; and in 1989 (see source below), another NPS official stated that “almost 700 private vehicles” crowded into the park that day in 1986.
- ¹⁸² *Anchorage Daily News*, September 10, 1989, G-1, G-3.
- ¹⁸³ SAR, 1990, 3; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 26, 1990, K-5; Russell W. Berry, Jr. to winning applicants, August 10, 1990, in “Road Opening History” file, Roads files, DENA; NPS, “Newsletter #1, DENA,” January 1990, 3; “Newsletter #3,” May 1990, 1-2; “Newsletter #4,” June 1990, 1; Joe Van Horn, review comment, March 28, 2007.
- ¹⁸⁴ *Anchorage Daily News*, September 11, 1992, B-3; September 13, 1992, B-1, B-2; September 17, 1992, B-2; July 2, 1993, A-3.
- ¹⁸⁵ NPS, *Draft GMP, DENA* (March 1985), 13; NPS, *Final GMP, DENA* (November 1986), 14.
- ¹⁸⁶ Tim Taylor to Ted Vinson email, March 27, 2003; Ted S. Vinson and David Lofgren, “Denali Park Access Road Icing Problems and Mitigation Options” (draft, Nov. 2002), pp. 3-6; Brad Ebel to Julie Wilkerson memo, October 21, 2002; various items in “Road Opening History” file; all in Roads files, DENA; SAR, 1978, 5; 1986, 4; Brad Ebel email, April 17, 2003 and August 28, 2006.
- ¹⁸⁷ Cummings to Col. T.R. Anderson, March 18, 1982, in Box 1, “Denali Park Road Issue” files, Bill Brown Collection, AKRO.
- ¹⁸⁸ Today in the “old park,” the NPS “has partial legislative jurisdiction because the State was afforded the right to tax persons and corporations and people residing in the old park have the right to vote in local elections. In all other respects, the Federal government has jurisdiction.” “Jurisdictional Compendium, Alaska Region,” ARO Ranger Division files.
- ¹⁸⁹ John E. Cook to Regional Solicitor, Alaska Region, January 7, 1983; Babson to Regional Director, NPS, February 7, 1983; Don Bauer, “Research Note,” April 12, 1983; all in Box 1, “Denali Park Road Issue” files, AKRO.
- ¹⁹⁰ Mark S. Hickey (DOT&PF Commissioner) to Stan Leaphart, April 29, 1988, in Steve Carwile files; ANILCA, Section 1110(b); *U.S. Statutes at Large* 94 (1980), 2465.
- ¹⁹¹ Bill Sherwonit, “Never Going Back,” 31; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 12, 1990, A-1, A-8.
- ¹⁹² *Anchorage Daily News*, June 14, 1990, D-1, D-3; June 15, 1990, C-3; June 16, 1990, B-1, B-3.
- ¹⁹³ *Anchorage Daily News*, June 17, 1990, A-6; *New York Times*, July 30, 1990, 9.
- ¹⁹⁴ *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 17, 1990, A-1, A-6; July 8, 1990, B-3.
- ¹⁹⁵ *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 17, 1990, A-1, A-7; “RV Park Planned Within Denali,” *National Parks* 64 (September/October 1990), 8.
- ¹⁹⁶ Steve Carwile interview, May 25, 2006 and July 25, 2007.
- ¹⁹⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, July 2, 1993, D-1; July 3, 1993, B-1, B-2.
- ¹⁹⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, July 5, 1993, A-1, A-8. By the July 4th weekend, the group had changed its name to the Alaska Reclamation Crew.
- ¹⁹⁹ *Anchorage Daily News*, April 2, 1994, A-1; “Minutes of the U.S. District Court, District of Alaska,” Case No. F93-072 and F93-073 (JKS), November 8, 1993, in Interior Department Solicitor’s Office files, Anchorage, A-12; “Struggle Continues Over Denali Roads,” *National Parks* 68 (May/June 1994), 10-11.
- ²⁰⁰ B.A. Campbell to Charles E. Cole, September 17, 1993, in DOT&PF, *Historical Analysis, McKinley Park Road Jurisdiction and Ownership*, September 13, 1993; Bruce M. Botelho to Bruce Babbitt, May 2, 1994; Botelho to Babbitt, May 5, 1994; all in Interior Department Solicitor’s Office files, Anchorage; “Road Warriors,” *Alaska* 60 (August 1994), 13.
- ²⁰¹ William E. Brown, *A History of the Denali-Mount McKinley Region, Alaska* (Santa Fe, NPS, 1991), 107-12.
- ²⁰² *Ibid.*, 207; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, October 15, 1936, 3; November 4, 1936, 5; December 30, 1936, 12; March 2, 1937, 7; March 9, 1937, 4.
- ²⁰³ *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, March 24, 1961, 3; May 27, 1961, 3; June 20, 1961, 1; August 19, 1963, 4; Eugene Therriault, *A Road to Stampede* (Fairbanks, State of Alaska, Northern Region, Department of Transportation, 1989), 8-13, Item 869, DENA RML.
- ²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 209-10; Bill Brown to author, email, November 21, 2005. Celia Hunter, in a *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* editorial (March 3, 1988, p. 4), stated that Pilgrim “used up the entire pioneer access road appropriation for one year” to construct this route.
- ²⁰⁵ *Anchorage Daily Times*, May 10, 1972, 9; John Reynolds (Team Captain, Team 2) to Project Leader, Alaska Task Force, April 26, 1973, in Alaska Planning Group, *Final Environmental Statement, Proposed Mount McKinley National Park Additions, Alaska*, 35, 37, 127-28.

- ⁷⁰⁰ *Anchorage Daily Times*, May 28, 1982, D-6; May 30, 1982, E-5. HJR 65, in *Alaska House Bill History, 1981-1982*, p. 513; SJR 53, in *Alaska Senate Bill History, 1981-1982*, p. 1053. The signed resolution became Legislative Resolve 16 in the 12th Alaska Legislature.
- ⁷⁰¹ *Anchorage Daily Times*, November 22, 1984, A-12; NPS, *Draft GMP* (March 1985), 25; NPS, *Final GMP* (November 1986), v, 31-32.
- ⁷⁰² *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, March 3, 1988, 4; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 13, 1989, I-7; *Alaska Senate Bill History, 1989-1990*, 107.
- ⁷⁰³ *United States Statutes at Large* 14 (July 26, 1866), 251-53; *Revised Statutes of the United States*, second edition (Washington, GPO, 1878), 453.
- ⁷⁰⁴ Michael Milstein, "Roads to Ruin," *National Parks* 67 (September/October 1993), 29-33; NPS, *Final GMP, DENA* (November 1986), v, 31-32, 185-88; SAR, DENA, 1990, 1.
- ⁷⁰⁵ *Anchorage Daily News*, August 26, 1991, D-1.
- ⁷⁰⁶ *Anchorage Daily News*, February 25, 1992, B-2.
- ⁷⁰⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, June 4, 1995, B-1.
- ⁷⁰⁸ SAR, DENA, 1990, 1; Russell Berry to James Parham [etc.], November 21, 1990, in "Northern Access, 1981-1994" file, DENA Admin History Collection; NPS, *Denali Access Task Force Report*, November 1991, 7, at ARLIS. The final three members were Don Castleberry (head of the Midwest Regional Office) and two Denver Service Center transportation planners, Jim Straughan and Elmer Hernandez.
- ⁷⁰⁹ NPS, *Denali Access Task Force Report*, 8, 21, 25; *Anchorage Daily News*, February 25, 1992, B-1, B-2; February 29, 1992, B-6; "NPS Report Supports Present Access at Denali," *National Parks* 66 (May/June 1992), 20; David Hulen, "Denali Hits Roadblock," *Alaska Magazine* 58 (July 1992), 7.
- ⁷¹⁰ *Anchorage Daily News*, February 25, 1992, B-2.
- ⁷¹¹ *Anchorage Daily News*, July 19, 1993, A-5; January 24, 1994, A-1, A-8; "Opening Up Alaska's Interior," *Alaska* 59 (August 1993), 12; SAR, 1993, 2; "Struggle Continues Over Denali Roads," 11; "Parks Highway to McGrath, 1993 Field Investigation" (unpublished research notebook), Carwile files.
- ⁷¹² *Alaska Senate Bill History, 1991-1992*, 253; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, August 23, 1991, 1.
- ⁷¹³ Alaska Legislature web page, "Bills and Resolutions" link for 17th and 18th Alaska legislatures (<http://old-www.legis.state.ak.us>); *Alaska House Bill History, 1993-1994*, for HJR 28 (p. 316).
- ⁷¹⁴ *Anchorage Daily News*, August 17, 1993, A-8. The Babbitt-Hickel trip down the park road took place on August 16. Supt. Russ Berry, who accompanied the two men, told Hickel that a recent consultant's report had concluded that a railroad to Kantishna would cost an estimated \$750 million. Hickel, however, was unmoved; he felt that a the proposed rail line was "a necessity."
- ⁷¹⁵ Alaska Legislature web page, "Bills and Resolutions" link for 17th and 18th Alaska legislatures (<http://old-www.legis.state.ak.us>); *Alaska House Bill History, 1993-1994*, 316. The signed resolution was Legislative Resolve 19 for the 18th Alaska Legislature.
- ⁷¹⁶ Public Law 102-240 (December 18, 1991), Sec. 1050; *U.S. Statutes at Large* 105 (1991), pp. 2000-01.
- ⁷¹⁷ NPS, *Alternative Transportation Modes, Feasibility Study, Vol. II: Executive Summary* (Denver, Denver Service Center, May 1994), ES-1, ES-14 through ES-16.
- ⁷¹⁸ Denali Task Force, *Denali Task Force Report; Findings and Recommendations for the National Park Service Advisory Board*, October 25, 1994, 7-8, Report 184/D-221, TIC Collection. The task force gave the advisory board an interim progress report at its mid-August meeting, and the board formally adopted the task force report at its December 14 meeting. *Federal Register* 59 (August 1, 1994), 38986-87, and *Federal Register* 59 (December 1, 1994), 61636.
- ⁷¹⁹ See *Anchorage Times*, August 17, 1980, E-8.
- ⁷²⁰ NPS, *Draft GMP, DENA*, 16; NPS, *Final GMP, DENA*, 18.
- ⁷²¹ SAR, 1983, 2; 1985, 2; NPS, *Draft GMP*, 15; NPS, *Final GMP*, 17.
- ⁷²² SAR, 1987, 3; 1988, 1; 1989, 2; 1990, 2.
- ⁷²³ U.S. Department of the Interior, *Budget Justifications: National Park Service*, annual issues, 1980 to 1995. A full-time equivalent, or FTE, is a composite number that accounts for the total labor force. If a park, for example, has 4 full-time employees plus 4 other employees that work a 3-month season, the park therefore has 5 FTEs. People hired under "local hire" provisions are exempt from the FTE ceiling.
- ⁷²⁴ Ralph Tingey interview, May 16, 2006.
- ⁷²⁵ Jane Bryant email, January 18, 2007.
- ⁷²⁶ NPS, *Historic Listing of National Park Service Officials*, May 1991, 90, 176, 186; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, October 26, 1994, B-2.
- ⁷²⁷ Ralph Tingey interview, May 16, 2006; Robert C. Cunningham interview, October 13, 2004; Russell Berry interview, June 18, 2004; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 8, 1992, B-2.
- ⁷²⁸ *Anchorage Times*, August 23, 1981, B-4, August 24, 1981, A-6; October 3, 1981, B-8; May 19, 1983, A-10; July 11, 1983, A-6.

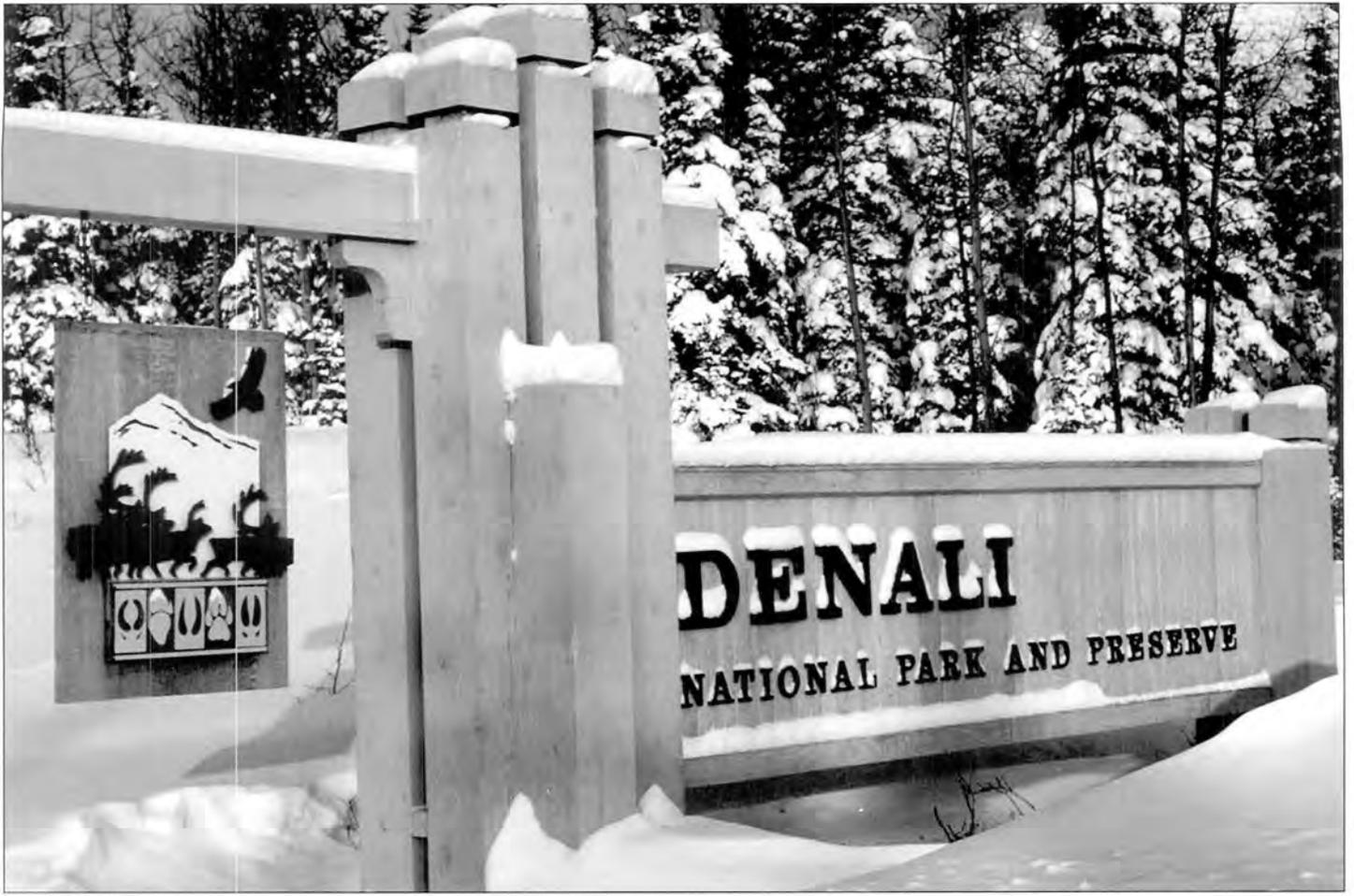
- ¹⁸⁵ NPS, *Supplement to Interim DCP, Headquarters/Hotel Area, February 1981*, 12; NPS, *Environmental Assessment, DCP, Park Road Corridor*, March 1982, 51-52; NPS, *DCP, DENA Park Road Corridor*, February 1983, 50.
- ¹⁸⁶ Stroud, *History of the Concession*, 35-36; SAR, 1984, 1.
- ¹⁸⁷ NPS, *Revised Draft GMP*, December 1985, 17; NPS, *Final GMP*, November 1986, iv-v, 17.
- ¹⁸⁸ SAR, 1985, 1; SAR, 1986, 1.
- ¹⁸⁹ NPS, *DENA, Addendum to the 1983 Development Concept Plan / Environmental Assessment for the Park Road Corridor* (Denver, the author, June 1987), 1, 5, 11; NPS, *Riley Creek Proposal and Finding of No Significant Impact* (pamphlet), March 1988; SAR, 1987, 4. The idea of a new visitor center—which would be just a mile away from the visitor access center that was just getting underway near Riley Creek Campground—was discussed by NPS officials in the August 12, 1987 *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, p. 2.
- ¹⁹⁰ SAR, 1988, 3; 1989, 2; Brad Richie interview, June 8, 2006. GDM's initial plans called for the construction of a new hotel on the same site as the existing hotel, thus minimizing the footprint of hotel development on the surrounding landscape. But in a December 1989 work session, the NPS changed course and decided to keep the old hotel open during the construction of a new hotel; this increased the impacted area from 7 acres to 10.2 acres.
- ¹⁹¹ Miscellaneous notes and correspondence, in "Denali Hotel" folder, Steve Carwile files.
- ¹⁹² John M. Morehead to Jack O'Neale, August 29, 1991, in "Denali Hotel" folder, Steve Carwile files.
- ¹⁹³ NPS, *Amendment to the 1983 Development Concept Plan/Environmental Assessment for the Park Road Corridor and 1987 Addendum, Riley Creek, DENA* (Denver?, the author, March 1992), 5-13; John M. Moorhead, "Finding of No Significant Impact, Construction of Hotel and Other Visitor Related Facilities...", July 1, 1992, Steve Carwile files.
- ¹⁹⁴ John M. Morehead to Assistant Inspector General for Audits, Interior, May 6, 1992, in "Denali Hotel" folder, Steve Carwile files; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 8, 1992, B-1, B-2; *Anchorage Daily News*, October 2, 1992, B-1; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, December 6, 1992, B-5; "Plans Scuttled for New Denali Hotel," *Alaska* 59 (February 1993), 12.
- ¹⁹⁵ *Anchorage Daily News*, December 5, 1985, A-1; February 28, 1986, B-1; NPS, *Final GMP*, November 1986, 21-22; Alaska Department of Natural Resources and National Park Service, *South Denali: A Concept Proposal for Developing a Major Visitor Destination in Denali State Park on the South Side of the Alaska Range*, 1986.
- ¹⁹⁶ SAR, 1986, 1.
- ¹⁹⁷ SAR, 1987, 4; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 11, 1987, D-1.
- ¹⁹⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, June 27, 1986, B-1; July 23, 1988, B-1; SAR, 1988, 1; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, March 3, 1988, 4. In January 1988, several members of both the Alaska House and Alaska Senate sponsored resolutions (HJR 49 and SJR 49, respectively) throwing legislative support behind "joint state, federal, and private participation in the cooperative planning and development of a South Denali visitors' complex." The House resolution, more successful than its Senate counterpart, handily passed the full House on March 17, but it quietly died in the State Senate. *Alaska House Bill History, 1987-1988*, 318; *Alaska Senate Bill History, 1987-1988*, 289.
- ¹⁹⁹ The master plan, released in mid-June 1989, called for the hotel, a 20-room wilderness lodge in the Tokositna area, and a road from the hotel to nearby Eldridge Glacier. *Anchorage Daily News*, September 16, 1988, B-1; September 29, 1988, B-6; March 1, 1989, A-1; March 21, 1989, B-1; Alaska Department of Natural Resources, *Denali State Park Master Plan*, 1989.
- ²⁰⁰ *Anchorage Daily News*, November 14, 1989, B-6; December 3, 1989, H-2; January 30, 1990, D-1, D-3; February 23, 1990, A-1; February 7, 1991, A-1; SAR, 1989, p. 2 and Addendum, p. 1; Jonathan Waterman, "Stealing Denali's Crown Jewels," *Backpacker* 18 (April 1990), 14.
- ²⁰¹ *Federal Register* 54 (October 11, 1989), 41691-92.
- ²⁰² SAR, 1990, 2.
- ²⁰³ Park planners selected the site, in part, because Section 1306 of ANILCA noted that "to the extent practicable and desirable, the [Interior] Secretary shall attempt to locate such [administrative] sites and [visitor] facilities on Native lands in the vicinity of the [park] unit."
- ²⁰⁴ *Federal Register* 56 (April 18, 1991), 15931; NPS, *Draft Development Concept Plan, Environmental Impact Statement, South Slope, DENA* (Denver, the author, May 1993), 10; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 9, 1991, A-1, A-12.
- ²⁰⁵ NPS, *Alternatives Workbook for the South Slope Development Concept Plan, DENA, Winter 1992* (the author, Denver Service Center, February 1992), 1-12.
- ²⁰⁶ *Anchorage Daily News*, January 14, 1992, B-6.
- ²⁰⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, March 5, 1992, B-3.
- ²⁰⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, March 25, 1992, B-2.

²⁶⁰ *Federal Register* 58 (July 8, 1993), 36699-700; *Federal Register* 58 (October 18, 1993), 53746; NPS, *Draft Development Concept Plan, South Slope* (May 1993), 18-21, 33, 35, 40, 43, 50-51; *Anchorage Daily News*, September 15, 1993, E-1; September 28, 1993, E-1.

²⁶¹ Mike Tranel interview, October 25, 2006.

²⁶² Roger G. Kennedy to Roger L. Williams (NPS Advisory Board), March 18, 1994, in "Correspondence, 75-on" folder (DENA), WASO History Office Collection.

²⁶³ SAR, 1995, 1; Denali Task Force, *Denali Task Force Report*, October 25, 1994, 6-8; *Federal Register* 60 (October 25, 1995), 54705.



Chapter Ten: Denali at the Cusp of the Millennium, 1995-present

By the mid-1990s, it had become increasingly clear that if new commercial growth were to take place in the park, that growth would be located south of the Alaska Range. In that area, NPS managers and planners had been working with the State of Alaska and the private sector since the late 1960s on a plan that might bring about a hotel or other major visitor development. The Denali Task Force, in its 1994 report, reiterated this longstanding interest. The report also underscored another longstanding policy, that “the existing character of the park road should be maintained.”² New growth could not take place along the park road corridor, for ecological reasons; new accommodations in the entrance area, or an increased number of buses along the park road, would have a demonstrable and negative impact on wildlife sightings and wildlife behavior—and thus destroy the very characteristics that attracted visitors to Denali.

Front Country Development Planning

As had been true since the early 1980s, the park’s most critical issues dealt with growth and its impacts. Inasmuch as most park visitors spent the lion’s share of their time in the so-called “front country”—that is, the park entrance area and road corridor—agency officials concentrated much of their management efforts within that area. As noted in Chapter 9, NPS officials had signed a key amendment to the park’s concessions contract in June 1994, and the criticisms that arose from that contract signing—from the Denali Task Force and from various advocacy groups—prodded the NPS into commencing yet another management plan for that area. Park-based NPS personnel, assisted by Denver Service Center staff, worked on the plan and, in June 1996, the agency presented a draft of that plan for public comment.

It was recognized from the outset that certain management actions were set in place, regardless of the plan’s outcome. For example, the total annual bus capacity and the number of campground spaces west of the entrance area would not change; and NPS road maintenance crews would continue, as before, to obtain gravel from the Teklanika Pit (mile 26.0 of the park road) and Toklat River (mile 53.4). And certain improvements were similarly incorporated into all plan alternatives: new interpretive signs would be erected around headquarters, new residences and support facilities would be built at Toklat Road Camp, housing would be improved at

both “C-Camp” and Toklat, and utilities would be upgraded in the headquarters and entrance areas.³ But other potential actions would be decided via the public involvement process. For instance, would Eielson Visitor Center be retained or replaced? Would the existing hotel be retained, improved, or demolished? Would the existing entrance area support facilities (the store, showers, and post office) be retained or replaced? Would interpretive facilities be limited to the existing Visitor Access Center (VAC) or would the agency construct a new visitor center to complement it? Potential scenarios regarding these and other questions were encapsulated in the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the entrance area and road corridor development concept plan. In addition to the two no-action scenarios, three other alternatives were presented. The purpose of one no-action alternative was simply to ensure that the various recommendations from previously-approved plans—specifically the 1986 General Management Plan and a 1992 document that, among its other provisions, updated the 1983 Development Concept Plan (DCP) for the park road corridor—would be implemented. One of the action alternatives was intended to reduce park facilities and services; another was to “emphasize traditional NPS programs,” and a final alternative was aimed to “emphasize visitor services and recreational opportunities. Alternative D, the aim of which was to “emphasize traditional NPS programs,” was a compromise between the cautious tone of Alternative C (which called for a reduction in facilities and services) and the development-oriented Alternative E, and agency personnel recommended Alternative D as its proposed action.⁴

The document was open to public comment beginning June 21, 1996, and between August 5 and August 14 the agency held hearings on the plan in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and four communities adjacent to the park. By the August 19 deadline, 262 members of the public had offered written comments and another 40 people had testified at the public hearings. Agency planners studied those comments and, in December, published an abbreviated Final EIS which called for the adoption of Alternative D, but with several significant modifications that incorporated elements from alternatives C and E.⁴

The plan recommended a detailed package of actions that was intended to guide the future

Denali’s welcome sign, wintertime.
Tom Habecker Collection

Since the 1988 demolition of the two-story railroad depot that housed the post office, the Denali National Park post office was located in a temporary building near the railroad wye. Outdoor postal boxes, on the right, were used for seasonal residents during the summer. This facility remained at this site until 2002. Tom Habecker Collection



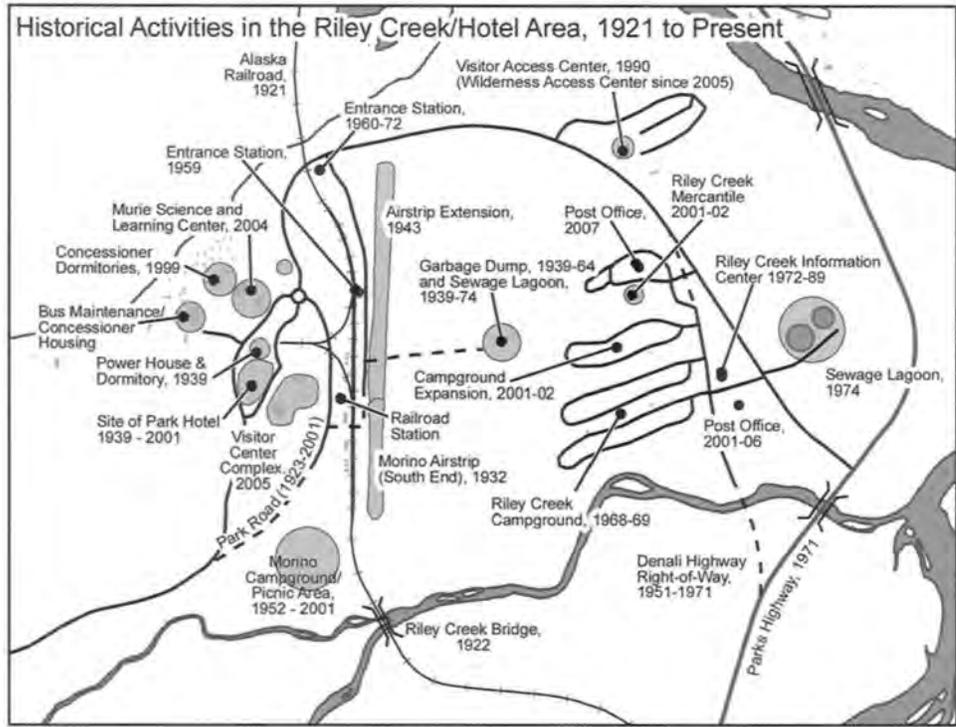
park. Perhaps most significant were recommendations to completely restructure the entrance area by:

- closing the park hotel (no later than 2002, the plan specified),
- expanding the VAC,
- constructing an entrance station just west of the Parks Highway junction,
- constructing a new visitor services building adjacent to the VAC (an idea that, as noted in Chapter 9, had first surfaced during the 1980s when the VAC was being considered)
- building a new environmental education and science center near the former hotel site,
- tearing down the old store (now known as the park mercantile), moving the existing post office (then located on the former railroad wye), and erecting new visitor support facilities (post office, store, and showers) near Riley Creek Campground,
- adding 50 new tent-only and walk-in spaces to Riley Creek Campground, which would allow agency officials to close the old, 60-site Morino Campground
- building a large new parking lot for the visitor services building,
- prohibiting the construction of a “hostel or other economy lodging” (as had been specified in the 1986 GMP), and
- closing the McKinley Park airstrip.

Away from the entrance area, the major recommended change was to replace Eielson Visitor Center, construct a rest area at Toklat River (where passengers on both the tour buses and shuttle buses often lingered), build rest areas both on the west side of Savage River and near Savage River Campground, and construct back-packer campgrounds in both the Kantishna area and along a yet-to-be-built trail paralleling the Nenana River. The plan recommended many other changes as well.⁵

NPS Regional Director Robert Barbee signed the Record of Decision for the DCP in February 1997.⁶ Meanwhile, the agency proceeded that year with planning the various specific actions that would be needed to carry out the plan. And in 1998, work included site design for the entrance area, site plans for expanding Riley Creek Campground, and interpretive plans for entrance area facilities.⁷

For the time being, all park facilities continued as before until project funds could be obtained from Congress. The Denali National Park Hotel, for example, continued to operate. Hotel operations, however, were predicated on Aramark’s concessions contract, and that contract was set to expire in late September 2001. Inasmuch as Aramark was operating other hotel properties outside the park, they made no move to protest the hotel’s imminent closure, and by January 2001 travel magazines were announcing that the upcoming summer would be the hotel’s last year of operation. The hotel closed its doors, for the final time, in mid-September 2001.⁸



Map 4. Historical Activities in the Riley Creek/Hotel Area, 1921 to Present

The hotel's closure neatly coincided with the NPS's plans for alternative site uses. During the following winter, Congress allotted the necessary funds to proceed with hotel site demolition; and in 2002 the auditorium that had formerly stood behind the hotel was detached and moved outside of the park.⁹ Other parts of the hotel were also recycled. The concessioner moved the 32-year-old west wing to McKinley Village for use as employee housing; a contractor moved the northern and southern hotel-room modules north to Healy, where they were reassembled and used as a hotel; the employee dining facility was moved just a few hundred yards to the concessions area, where it became "Horseshoe Creek

Pizza;" and a local contractor disassembled the hotel's gift shop and salvaged nearly all of the building materials for reuse. The eight railroad cars that had formerly surrounded the hotel entrance were sold for \$1 apiece and moved away. What then remained of the hotel—the lobby, kitchen, and dining area, along with some ancillary buildings—was demolished. By the fall of 2003, no structures remained at the former hotel site.¹⁰ (See Map 4.) The adjacent powerhouse and dormitory, both built during the late 1930s, remained standing.

The same bureaucratic process that funded the razing of the park hotel also provided for other



In 2002, the 5,000 square-foot auditorium was moved in one piece from its location behind the park hotel to a site just north of Healy. Clayton Flagg Collection

The railroad cars that had formerly been pressed into service to create part of the “temporary” hotel after the 1972 fire were sold for \$1 each and moved away. NPS Photo



area construction activities. By the fall of 2001, for example, the construction of a new “Camper Convenience Center” (including a store and shower facilities) and the 50-space expansion of Riley Creek Campground were well underway.¹¹ And work also began on realigning the park road; supported by project funds in the Interior Department’s 2000 budget bill, the park road was moved from the east to the west side of the hotel site, and by the end of the 2002 summer season a new traffic roundabout had been installed just northwest of the Denali Park railroad station.¹²

NPS officials, however, could not proceed with other area improvements without completing a site-specific environmental assessment (EA). So in November 2001, park officials released such a document to the public. Some elements in the EA were a logical follow-up to actions that had been recommended in the 1997 road-corridor DCP; these included the construction of a Science and Learning Center, a “visitor services building,” and the construction of a large parking lot. But NPS officials, in this latest plan, decided to transform the visitor services building into

Those parts of the former McKinley Park Hotel that were not moved for reuse elsewhere were demolished. NPS Photo



a large, multi-use structure that would house a visitor center, a theatre, a food court, a concessions area and an art gallery. Moreover, this new structure—and the accompanying parking lot—would be located on or near the footprint of the old hotel, because the site was adjacent to the railroad station and because the new site protected park resources and animal habitat by using “pre-disturbed land.” And perhaps because of the large size of the new visitor center complex, officials decided to not go ahead with the planned VAC expansion.¹³

After NPS officials issued the Visitor Facility EA, they held three open houses to solicit public comment; these were held between December 6 and 12 in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Healy. The public was given until January 11, 2002 to provide comments. The agency incorporated those comments into final environmental documents that were approved at the end of January. Those latter-day documents provided greater specificity to what was proposed; the major project elements now consisted of a 14,500-square-foot visitor center and a new Denali Science and Learning Center.¹⁴

During the summer of 2002, crews demolished the 44-year-old store (the so-called “park mercantile”);¹⁵ that same year, the double-wide trailer that had served as the Denali National Park post office since the late 1980s was moved to a site near the entrance to Riley Creek Campground.¹⁶ And based on the results of the recently-completed environmental assessment, NPS officials went ahead with design work on two major new entrance-area structural complexes: the so-called “Denali Science and Learning Center” and the

visitor center complex. By the end of 2002, planning and design work on the two building complexes was essentially complete. The following year, Superintendent Anderson—with the concurrence of Louise Murie MacLeod, Adolph Murie’s widow—decided to name the proposed educational facility in honor of the Murie family; that year also, the Criterion and Davis construction firm won the contract to build the Murie Science and Learning Center (MSLC) as well as the park’s visitor center. By the fall of 2003, work on both building complexes was “underway and on schedule.” A lack of funding, however, forced NPS officials to delay work on the visitor center and exhibits package.¹⁷

As a result, contractors commenced work on the learning center first. Plans for the complex had originally called for three buildings at the site: one organized around meeting rooms, a second for dining facilities, and a third that served as a dormitory for park employees and visiting scholars. The winning contract included funds for the first two structures, but funds were not sufficient to fund the dormitory building. Contractors worked through the winter and into the following summer. On August 16, 2004, NPS officials dedicated the Murie Science and Learning Center with a public open house, accompanied by a lecture on Murie by Alaska Pacific University professor Tim Rawson. Jan Murie, Adolph’s son, represented the family at that event.¹⁸ Just a month later, MSLC gained a new function when it began serving as the park’s wintertime visitor center. During the winter of 2004-05, construction crews and interpretive specialists completed their work on the three-building Denali Visitor Center complex. That complex, which consisted



The new Murie Science and Learning Center, completed in 2004, functions as the winter visitor contact station for the park from October into May, and other educational functions are located there during the summer season. NPS Photo

The new facilities of the Murie Science and Learning Center were officially dedicated with a public open house on August 16, 2004. Officials presiding at the ribbon-cutting ceremony are, from left to right, Dr. Mike Sfraga, Jack Reiss, Marcia Blaszak, Dr. Jan Murie, Dr. James Tate, Mark Moderow, Randy Jones, Dr. Carol Lewis, and Superintendent Paul Anderson. NPS Photo



of the visitor center along with the adjacent Denali Bookstore and the Morino Grill, opened to the public in stages between May 14 and May 27, 2005. Three months later, on August 18, NPS officials dedicated the new center; those on hand included Director Fran Mainella, Regional Director Marcia Blaszak, and Superintendent Paul Anderson.

The opening of the new visitor center also brought changes to the fifteen-year-old Visitor Access Center east of the Alaska Railroad tracks. The park concessioner, rather than the NPS, assumed management over the facility; it was renamed the Wilderness Access Center; its theater began showing the historical film *Across Time and Tundra* rather than the 22-year-old *Denali Wilderness* film; and the Alaska Natural History Association bookstore moved from the center itself to the adjacent (and new) Denali Bookstore. In addition, all functions related to backcountry activities moved out to the new Backcountry Information Center, located in an adjacent ATCO trailer. The primary function of the Wilderness Access Center was providing visitors the opportunity to enter the park—through reservations and actual boarding—via the concessioner-operated shuttle bus system.¹⁹

The last major construction projects to emerge from the entrance-area DCP were the replacement of Eielson Visitor Center and the construction of visitor facilities adjacent to the Toklat Bridge. As noted in chapters 7 and 8, Eielson

Visitor Center was built between 1958 and 1960 and expanded between 1974 and 1976. Even with the expansion, however, the center was sometimes overcrowded (particularly on inclement days), and it also suffered from structural deterioration. To improve site interpretation, NPS personnel in 1993 started on design work to rehabilitate the center's interior and to add new exhibits and interpretive displays. That work was completed and installed in June 1995.²⁰ But more substantial work did not take place until after the 1997 completion of the entrance-area DCP. In 2003, the NPS completed most of the design work associated with a new visitor center at the site, and in early April 2004 the agency released an environmental assessment pertaining to the proposed project. Public comment, originally set to end in early May, was later extended to May 21.²¹ Shortly afterward, agency officials approved a plan alternative that called for the new visitor center, and the 44-year-old visitor center closed for the last time in September 2004. Demolition began in mid-summer 2005. Each summer since that time, construction crews rather than visitors have occupied the site; during this period, shuttle-bus passengers—who for years had gone on to Eielson before turning around—have instead gone only as far as an unimproved turnaround at “Fish Creek” (Little Stony Creek) at mile 63 of the park road, three miles east of Eielson. Plans call for a new Eielson Visitor Center, which will have more than twice the interior space as the former facility, to open in the spring of 2008.²²



Shown center, in this fall 2004 photo, is the large new parking lot on the former McKinley Park Hotel site, with the hotel powerhouse and dormitory to the right. The Denali Visitor Center is left of center, still under construction. Note the rerouting of the park road from the roundabout on the far right and going to the north of the new parking lot. The old routing of the park road provides access to the depot and terminates there. Fire Management Collection, NPS, Denali National Park and Preserve

The other project planned during this period was the construction of a new rest area just west of the Toklat River. Since 1972, when passenger traffic had been restricted on the park road, the Tundra Wildlife Tour had terminated at various points along the park road. For a number of years until the mid-1970s, the bus turnaround point on clear days had been Stony Hill Overlook (mile 62), which offered a superb view of Mount McKinley, but on cloudy days buses had turned around at the so-called “soapberry patch” just east of the Toklat River Bridge. In 1976, the expansion of Eielson Visitor Center allowed tour buses—on fair days or foul—to continue to the Mile 66 visitor center. But after the June 1981 bus accident (see Chapter 9), the cloudy-weather terminus reverted to the soapberry patch. Nine years later, tour buses moved their foul-weather turnaround point a half-mile west to a cleared area near the west bank of the Toklat River and just 200 yards north of the park road. The 1997 DCP called for improvements there: specifically a rest area, with a shelter and a permanent comfort station. But action regarding those recommendations did not take place until 2004, when Toklat

improvements were included as part of the same funding package (and environmental assessment) as the Eielson Visitor Center replacement. (Of the two action alternatives in the EA, one called for site development at the existing site, 200 yards north of the park road, while the other recommended that improvements be placed 600 yards north of park road. NPS officials chose the second alternative.) Soon after NPS officials approved the project in the late spring of 2004, the site work began, and by late July 2005 a tent-style shelter and newly-installed restrooms (the latter known as “SSTs”) were ready for visitor use.⁴³

Several other projects that were approved in the 1997 DCP have recently been completed or are under construction. They include a reopened (and rerouted) Triple Lakes Trail, which had been effectively closed for more than twenty years; a Riley Creek cultural resources trail (now called the McKinley Station Trail), and the Savage Alpine Trail which ascends the hill from the Savage River parking area.⁴⁴ Other projects are slated for near-term development. The NPS, for example, is gearing up to construct an entrance station just



Eielson Visitor Center was demolished during the late summer of 2005. NPS Photo

west of the Parks Highway junction. There are also plans in the works to build a permanent post office near Riley Creek campground. The NPS is also planning, in the not-too-distant future, to build a rest area along the park road in the vicinity of Savage River Campground.

Other portions of the plan, however, have thus far not been acted upon and may not be fulfilled for years if at all. Plans to convert some housing from concessioner to NPS use have thus far been stalled, and there are no immediate plans to construct any new NPS housing. The projected closure of the McKinley Park Airstrip was put on indefinite hold due to protests from both

legislators and pilot advocacy groups.²⁵ Because of protests from existing lodge owners, it is doubtful that any new hostelrys will open in the Kantishna area during the foreseeable future. And along the park's eastern boundary, no action has yet been taken on a Nenana Canyon trail, with or without an accompanying campground.

One recent project that is unrelated to the DCP is a proposed railroad turnaround track. Just north of the McKinley Park railroad depot, the Alaska Railroad had had a wye since the 1920s; that short turnaround spur, however, had been taken up during the 1980s. In 1999, Alaska Railroad president Bill Sheffield broached the idea of a



This area, just west of the Toklat River bridge, was used as a rest stop for shuttle and tour buses. The number of chemical toilets gradually increased over the years. NPS Photo

The new Toklat contact station and "SSTs" (Sweet Smelling Toilets) comprised the main rest area for bus passengers during the Eielson Visitor Center demolition and new construction of 2005-2007. NPS Photo



new wye that would be located just north of the Lagoon maintenance-of-way station and east of the main right-of-way. That idea made little headway, but in 2006 railroad officials initiated discussions about the construction of a balloon wye (i.e., a loop track that enabled trains to change direction) in order to allow train sets to move from Fairbanks to the park and return northbound immediately thereafter. This loop would be in the same general area where the wye had been proposed seven years earlier. Park officials quickly recognized the need for such a track. To remove remaining legal barriers to the deal the Alaska congressional delegation supported a proposed land trade: 25 acres of new railroad easement on park land (in the immediate vicinity of the proposed wye) for 25 fewer acres of railroad easement (just west of the railroad track in the Moody area). Bills to implement the trade were introduced in the House and Senate in February and July 2007, respectively, and in late September hearings on the bills were held in both chambers. An amended bill passed the House on October 22, 2007. As of this writing, the bill awaits Senate action.²⁶

Concessions Issues

ARA Services, Inc., which was doing business as Outdoor World, Ltd., signed a 20-year concessions contract with the NPS on September 26, 1981 (see Chapter 9); this contract allowed ARA to operate both the Denali Park Hotel and tour buses into the park. By the early 1990s, ARA's name had changed to ARA Leisure Services, Inc., and in 1994 it changed again to Aramark Sports and Leisure; throughout this period, however, the park concessioner was doing business as Denali Park Resorts. Between 1981 and 1995, the NPS and the concessioner had amended the contract three times; one of those amendments, as Chap-

ter 9 noted, had made newspaper headlines and had brought a significant shifting of operational responsibility for the park's bus system from NPS to the concessioner. During the remainder of the 1990s the contract was amended two more times, but neither of these amendments was of particular public interest.

Both the park concessioner and NPS officials were well aware that the concessions contract would expire shortly after the 2001 visitor season. NPS officials, in response, had much of the paperwork for a new contract ready as early as 1999. But bureaucratic fallout from Congress's passage of the 1998 concessions law,²⁷ plus new agency procedures which brought a non-NPS partner into the prospectus-writing process, forced a protracted revision of that paperwork. As a result, concessions and agency personnel were unable to fashion a new contract in time; in its stead, they inked an interim document. On October 1, 2001, the NPS and the concessioner—which was now called Aramark Sports and Entertainment Services, Inc.—signed a one-year extension to the 1981 contract.²⁸

Late in 2001, NPS officials were finalizing bid specifications for a new 10-year contract. On February 15, 2002, the agency issued a contract prospectus for "transportation and related services" at the park, and bidders were given until May 20 to respond. The concessioner, during this period, may have been aware that, according to Section 1307(a) of ANILCA, concessioners who had been providing visitor services within Alaska's conservation units prior to January 1979 would be able to continue providing those services, so long as those services were consistent with the purposes of that conservation unit. But beginning in 1984, a series of stock transfers

The Denali Visitor Center opened in the spring of 2005 and was officially dedicated on August 18, 2005. NPS Photo



changed ARA Services, Inc. from an independent corporation into a subsidiary of ARA Holding Co. Because of this action, NPS officials informed the concessioner that it was no longer a “historic operator of visitor services” and was thus ineligible for a preference on its renewal application.²⁹

The NPS received two responses to the bid prospectus, and both met all of the minimum contract requirements. One bid came from Delaware North Parks Services, a Buffalo, New York-based company that had concessions operations at Yosemite and Sequoia national parks as well as in several state parks and other visitor areas. The other bidder was a joint venture between the existing concessioner (Aramark) and Doyon, Limited. Doyon, which since the early 1970s has been the designated Native regional corporation serving much of Interior Alaska, had a 51% controlling interest in the new venture. Inasmuch as Section 1307 of ANILCA provided a preference in the provision of visitor services for either local residents or for “the Native Corporation which ... is most directly affected by the establishment or expansion of such unit,”³⁰ this partnership was doubtless created in order to take advantage of that preference. That preference, however, was not needed. Because of cost factors, and a commitment to provide fuel-efficiency in both buses and fuel type,³¹ NPS Director Fran Mainella approved the Aramark/Doyon partnership proposal on July 24, 2002. Six days later, NPS officials announced that they had awarded the

Doyon/Aramark joint venture a ten-year park concession contract.³² It was the first time in which an Alaska-based Native corporation had partnered and successfully bid on a large NPS concessions contract.³³

The new contract required the concessioner to construct \$4.55 million in facilities improvements, including the Murie Science and Learning Center and the Morino Grill. In addition, the concessioner assumed control over the operation and maintenance of both the Riley Creek and Savage River campgrounds. The joint venture’s bid promised higher income to the government; the concessioner would now be paying the NPS 15.4 percent of gross revenue rather than approximately 7.5 percent, which had been the norm since 1996. The concessioner’s franchise fee, almost \$2 million based on an annual (2003) gross of \$13 million, would be used for concession related needs first, and secondarily for other park operations (as opposed to the previous contract, when all fees were used for concession related capital improvements at the park). For the park visitor, the new contract promised newer bus equipment and, temporarily, a reduction in shuttle bus fees. These fees, in 2002, ranged from \$17 to about \$30 depending on ride length and the rider’s age.³⁴

As noted in Chapter 9, the surge in park visitation between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s had forced NPS officials to devote an enormous amount of attention to the bus capacity issue.

Part of the Denali Visitor Center complex, the Denali Bookstore, on the left, and the Morino Grill, right, were completed and opened in May, 2005. NPS Photo



This had been a particularly high-profile issue during the mid-1980s, when the park general management plan (GMP) was being prepared; during the late 1980s and early 1990s, when officials prevented passenger cars from accessing most of the park's campgrounds; during the early 1990s, when battles were fought over road ownership and a second road to Kantishna; and during the mid-1990s, when a proposed concessions contract amendment temporarily offered the promise of additional shuttle bus capacity. The 1990 introduction of the Denali Natural History Tour, to Primrose Ridge, provided an additional opportunity for tour bus passengers; visitors took the tour because their tour-package option gave them a limited amount of time to see the park, and NPS officials recognized the need for the tour because it provided an opportunity for increased visitor access without pushing against the established bus passenger capacity ceilings that had been established in the 1986 GMP. And perhaps because of the increasing popularity of the Denali Natural History Tour—which by the late 1990s was hauling as many passengers as both the shuttle bus and the Tundra Wildlife Tour—the bus-capacity issue ceased to be the high-profile headache that it had been earlier.³⁵

Part of the reason that the bus-capacity issue receded into the background was a simple matter of visitor volume. Between 1981 and 1992, the number of passengers heading out the park road (beyond Primrose Ridge) had steadily climbed from about 105,000 to 212,000. But after

1992, traffic west of Primrose Ridge leveled off, and annual passenger traffic totals since 1992 have consistently ranged from about 184,000 to 209,000.³⁶ The reason for the “flattening” in the annual number of visitors west of Primrose is not related to general Alaska visitation trends; indeed, the annual number of out-of-state visitors to Alaska more than doubled during this period.³⁷ Instead, additional visitor demand was apparently satisfied by those who took the Denali Natural History Tour. Pressure on the park's bus system has also eased somewhat because in the ten-year-period after 1993, total recreational park visitation neither rose nor fell to any dramatic degree. This state of affairs has taken place, to some extent, because Outside tour operators have been successful in offering their patrons less crowded alternative tour destinations. In addition, these operators have offered tours with a two-night rather than one-night stay at their Denali-area properties; this lengthened stay has decreased total demand for bus tours out the park road.³⁸

The 2001 concessions contract, similar to its 1994 antecedent, institutionalized the application of fees for those wishing to ride the park's shuttle bus. As earlier chapters have noted, visitors since the earliest days had paid a fee to ride into the park on the concessioner's tour vehicles, and visitors who used the park campgrounds had paid overnight camping fees since about 1970. But the shuttle bus, which had begun operations in 1972, had remained free for years afterward. In the spring of 1988, NPS officials began assessing a



Tour buses regularly stop at Polychrome Rest Stop for passengers to use the restroom facilities and to enjoy the panoramic views. Photo © Kennan Ward, NPS Interp. Collection, #4629

\$3 entrance fee, both to tour bus and shuttle bus passengers. That fee was raised to \$4 in 1994; for tour bus passengers, the fee was included as part of the \$49 ticket price. But as noted in Chapter 9, the concessions contract amendment inked in June 1994 called for the first-ever fees for shuttle-bus ridership; those fees, moreover, would be based on the distance traveled. In January 1995, the NPS announced that bus riders that summer would pay \$26 for a Wonder Lake round trip, \$20 to Eielson, or \$12 to Toklat; discounts or special fares were provided for children, campers, and those who purchased multiple-ride packages. In addition, bus riders were required to pay the lower park entrance fee of \$3 per person, although a new family fee of \$5 was also available.³⁹

The coming years brought additional fee increases that were unrelated to Visitor Transportation System operations. In November 1996, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt announced that beginning in 1997, the park entrance fee would be roughly doubled, to \$5 per person and \$10 per family. Then, in April 2004, an NPS spokesperson announced a new fee increase, to \$10 per person or \$20 per family. That increase went into effect in January 2005. That action, as all previous fee-related actions, assumed that only adults aged 17 or more would be charged entrance fees;

but in January 2006, in response to the recently-passed Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, the agency began assessing fees to all visitors who were at least 16 years old. The 1997 and 2005 increases—which were conscious decisions by NPS personnel to spread park fees among all park visitors—affected not only those who rode out the park road, but it was also extended to the relatively small number of mountain climbers and flightseeing passengers who flew into the park’s backcountry.⁴⁰ As for shuttle bus ridership fees since the mid-1990s, most have risen fairly modestly; the adult Wonder Lake bus ride in 2006 cost \$33.25 (a 27% increase since 1995). Trips that year to the “Fish Creek” turnaround spot (3 miles east of Eielson) and Toklat cost \$24.25 (up 21% over the 1995 Eielson fee) and \$19 (up 58% from 1995), respectively.⁴¹

Beyond the ever-present capacity issues, the park’s bus systems in recent years have operated with a minimum of mishaps and rancor. As noted in Chapter 9, the safety of the park’s buses had come into question because of a disastrous 1981 tour bus accident; what followed was an internal investigation and the concessioner’s decision to go no farther than Stony Hill, four miles short of Eielson Visitor Center. Since then, the park’s buses have been plagued by only two

high-profile mishaps: one in 1989, the other in 1998. (In July 1989, a collision of two shuttle buses near Wonder Lake resulted in four injuries, two of them serious, while in July 1998 a Natural History Tour bus heading westbound near the Savage River became engulfed in flames, but all 48 passengers were safely evacuated and avoided injury.)⁴² The drivers, too, retained relatively harmonious relations with the concessioner. In June 1996, the various tour- and shuttle-bus drivers had started a Teamsters-affiliated union, called the Denali National Park Professional Drivers Association, and in mid-July 1999 its members voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike if the company refused their wage-related demands. But on July 21, the drivers and Aramark reached a tentative agreement on a new, two-year contract calling for higher wages and benefits; union members finalized the agreement via a lopsided vote that August. The contract renewal process in the years since then has gone fairly smoothly.⁴³

In 2006 and 2007, bus drivers figured prominently in another labor issue that affected a broad range of park concessions workers. For a number of years, Teamsters Union representatives had claimed that the provisions of the Service Contract Act (SCA)⁴⁴ applied to concessions employees in Denali. NPS leaders resisted this, relying on a longstanding interpretation of U.S. Labor Department regulations exempting NPS concessions from the SCA, but on June 23, 2006 the Labor Department ruled in the Teamsters' favor. As a result, the Doyon/Aramark joint venture was required to offer its employees increased wages and benefits. (Bus drivers would receive marginally higher pay, while more poorly-compensated employees would receive

more substantial wage boosts.) These increased wages, moreover, had to be effective July 23, 2006. Doyon/Aramark requested a franchise fee reduction to offset the higher wages, claiming the higher wages were not accounted for in the financial model on which the franchise fee had been calculated. In March 2007, the NPS's Alaska Regional Office and Doyon/Aramark agreed to a 15 percent increase in the rates for shuttle buses for 2007. (Tour bus rates were not changed because most of these tickets had already been sold.) In addition, the two parties agreed to support a franchise fee reduction to cover SCA related costs for 2006-2007. Beginning with the 2008 season, both parties agreed to cover SCA related costs with an increase in rates for tour buses and possibly other services rather than a franchise fee reduction.⁴⁵

Continuing Controversy Over Kantishna Access

As noted in Chapter 9, the State of Alaska and local commercial interests had forwarded various proposals during the 1980s and early 1990s for an alternate route into the park. Most of the proposals during the 1980s involved a second road between the Parks Highway and Kantishna over the general Stampede Trail right-of-way; in 1989 these proposals were supplemented by a plan, touted by a Fairbanks engineer, for a railroad to Kantishna that followed much the same right-of-way as the various road proposals. Two years later, these were followed by more sophisticated ideas backed by Joe Fields and other Fairbanks-based development advocates. The Alaska legislature, in response, passed resolutions asking the federal government to support new access routes, and the state transportation department publicized



Shuttle bus drivers, shown here at Eielson Visitor Center, orchestrate a complex schedule. NPS Photo

a proposed road to McGrath that was later recognized as a back-door route to Kantishna. The NPS, however, showed little enthusiasm for any new access routes; although Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt informally broached the idea of a new railroad in the park during a 1993 visit, an agency report in early 1992 as well as the Denali Task Force report in late 1994 recommended no significant changes to existing access patterns.

Alaskans hoping to see a new route into the park were encouraged to see that the National Park System Advisory Board, at its December 1994 meeting, endorsed the idea of “a new northern railroad route” into Denali. And they were also glad to hear that Kantishna Holdings, Inc.—the Fairbanks group headed by Joe Fields that had formed several years earlier—was getting more serious with its plans to build a privately-financed, 90-mile-long railroad between Healy and Wonder Lake. In June 1995, Fields announced specific plans for the railroad, which would run all year long and would consist of a natural gas-fired locomotive hauling double-decker train cars. Fields felt that the project could be profitable because there were 250,000 annual visitors, in his estimation, who arrived at the park but were unable to access the park’s more distant western points. He estimated that \$280 million would be able to pay for a 90-mile-long railroad as well as a 300-room hotel at both ends of the proposed rail line. To finance the project, Fields averred that there were private (although undisclosed) syndicates willing to put up the “big money.” The three-member Alaska congressional delegation, upon hearing of the plan, reiterated its support for the construction of a railroad into Denali. Sen. Frank Murkowski was especially supportive of any plan that promised new access; he did, however, admit that “there has always been a light brushover of the financing” for the Fields proposal, and he likewise encouraged a rail terminus at Kantishna rather than Wonder Lake.⁴⁶

Murkowski, a Fairbanks Republican with 16 years of Senate seniority, responded to the Fields proposal by asking the NPS to conduct a new park access study. Noting that the agency had reported about 500,000 recreational visits into the park during each of the three previous seasons, and recognizing that about 250,000 people rode buses into the park in 1994, Murkowski concluded that the other 250,000 visitors “were not able to enter the park” because the buses were full. Stating that the park had “a short season and everything is plugged,” Murkowski in August 1995 used his position as the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee chair to insert an amendment into the 1996 Interior Department budget bill calling for the NPS “to conduct a Feasibility Study for a

northern access route” into the park.⁴⁷ That bill, which became law the following spring, called for the study’s completion by April 1997.⁴⁸

The NPS responded to Congress’s directive in two ways. First, it recognized that it needed to change its visitor counting methodology from one that counted total vehicle traffic heading up the park road (i.e., number of visits, including casual local traffic) to one that more accurately reflected the actual number of park visitors. Given that change in counting methods, recreational park visitation slipped from 543,309 in 1995 to 341,395 in 1996 (a 37 per cent drop), even though overall visitation dropped only slightly. These new visitation figures demonstrated—Senator Murkowski’s claims to the contrary—that relatively few visitors were unable to access the park’s interior and that, consequently, the market for an alternative access route was significantly smaller than had been perceived.⁴⁹

Second, the NPS responded to the Congressional mandate by completing another study investigating the viability of various northern access routes into the park. As noted in the park’s annual report, the “park staff worked closely with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities [DOT&PF], the Alaska Railroad Corporation and others to insure that the final report contains accurate information presented in an objective manner.” In late January 1997, NPS staff conducted open houses in Anchorage, Healy and Fairbanks “designed to share information about the Northern Access Feasibility Study.” At those meetings, agency officials stated that a proposed road or railroad along the Stampede route did not appear to pose any insoluble engineering hurdles. The routes would, however, be expensive: about \$100 million for a narrow paved road and up to \$198 million for a railroad. The study also tentatively concluded that visitors along a northern route would see fewer bears, wolves, and other wildlife, although they would have more views of Mount McKinley, weather permitting. The study was completed, as scheduled, in April 1997. The 32-page final report provided a number of detailed options regarding construction costs: \$87.4 million for a narrow, 80-mile-long gravel road, \$100.1 million for a paved road, and between \$136.1 million and \$227.5 million for an 86-to-95-mile-long railroad. Given the study’s cost figures, NPS officials concluded that building a new access route was “not a high priority of the tourism industry when compared to other potential developments in the state.”⁵⁰

During this same period, however, Kantishna Holdings remained active in its pursuit of a privately-funded rail line between the Healy

area and Wonder Lake. In response, various Railbelt communities (both cities and boroughs) endorsed the project.⁵¹ The Alaska Legislature also did what it could to advance the project. During its 1997 session, House and Senate members sponsored identically-worded joint resolutions “supporting enhancement of visitor access” to the park “through development of a northern railroad route corridor access to the vicinity of Wonder Lake.” The Senate’s resolution—which was sponsored by four senators and two representatives, most of whom hailed from the Fairbanks area—moved quickly and uneventfully through the legislature, and Governor Tony Knowles signed the measure on May 21.⁵²

After the NPS’s Denver Service Center completed the north access feasibility study in April 1997, it was approved by successively higher-echelon officials, and in late October 1997, the Interior Department was finally able to transmit the study to Alaska Senator (and Energy and Natural Resources Chairman) Frank Murkowski. That report noted that as many as 241,000 people per year would use the new route, but the route “would have a greater effect on the number of visits than the number of visitors.” The Department also stated that the new route would be contrary to the park’s general management plan and that the construction cost—even for a gravel road—would (according to the Department’s transmittal letter) “eat up every dollar planned for park access development in the state for the next decade.” Senator Murkowski, however, was not dissuaded by the high cost figures; he noted that by the time project design was completed, “there is no doubt . . . that the existing park road, which is insufficient now to handle current visitation, will be totally inadequate to serve Alaska’s No. 1 tourist attraction.” He therefore stated that in 1998, he would introduce legislation to authorize funding for an extensive environmental review and planning for the new access route; these funds would underwrite an environmental impact study and more detailed engineering proposals.⁵³ Murkowski did as promised, and on June 9, 1998, President Clinton signed a massive highway bill known as the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, otherwise known as “TEA-21.” A provision within that bill authorized the expenditure of \$1.5 million to “construct [a] North Denali access route.”⁵⁴ State officials designated that the Denali Borough, within which the proposed route was located, would be in charge of overseeing the expenditure of these funds.⁵⁵

Even before that bill became law, the Alaska State Legislature intervened to stimulate interest in the project. In February 1998, the House Rules

Committee, at Governor Knowles’ request, had introduced a bill to provide projects and funds for the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA). As the bill made its initial steps through the legislative process, it made no mention of Denali-related projects. But on May 10—less than a month before TEA-21 became law—the Senate Transportation Committee emerged with a committee substitute that provided for AIDEA to “issue bonds to finance the development of a railroad right-of-way within a railroad and utility corridor from near the village of Healy along the general alignment of the Stampede Trail to the eastern boundary of Denali National Park.” Up to \$28,000,000 in bonds would be made available for this purpose. The bill also stated that the state would grant AIDEA a 300-foot-wide corridor in the so-called “wolf townships,” the land to be used to assist Kantishna Holdings, Inc. for a proposed utility corridor and for “maintenance of a railroad and facilities to support that development project.” Just two days later, on May 11, the bill passed the Senate, and Governor Knowles signed it into law on June 18. The bill, however, pertained only to state-owned lands, and because Congress made no move to provide an easement for the remaining 55 miles of federal land in the proposed railroad corridor, AIDEA made no attempt to issue the bonds that the legislature had authorized. AIDEA’s lack of activity, plus the legislature’s apparent lack of interest in providing state matching funds, prevented much progress from taking place during this period.⁵⁶ One person who was an active project participant, however, was Don Lowell, a Fairbanks consultant well-known to DOT&PF officials. Lowell, beginning in late 2000 and continuing into 2001, apparently was paid \$180,000 for planning services pertaining to an alternate route into Kantishna.⁵⁷

The funds that Congress had authorized for environmental work—originally \$1.5 million, now reduced to \$1.32 million—required state matching funds, so on the opening day of the 2001 Alaska legislative session, State Senator Eugene Therriault submitted a bill “making a special appropriation for studies for the northern access into Denali National Park and Preserve.” The bill initially allotted \$264,000 in matching funds for these studies, but a month later the total increased to \$330,000. Therriault’s bill was later folded into the state’s capital budget bill, where it became Section 20; this bill passed the legislature on May 8 and was signed by Governor Knowles on June 30. These funds were matched with the \$1.32 million that remained from the “TEA-21” bill.⁵⁸ A total of \$1.65 million was therefore available for the preparation of a North Denali Access Route Planning and Reconnaissance Study.



Where the Stampede Road crosses the Sushana River, a bus was left by the Stampede Road contractor. Since the 1960s it has been used as a temporary shelter by hunters, trappers and other travelers along the trail. NPS Photo

Neither TEA-21 nor the matching state grant gave any specific direction regarding where the state should locate its northern access route. Another bill that year in the Alaska legislature, however, recommended the Stampede Road route. As noted above, legislators in 1998 had passed a bill authorizing AIDEA to issue bonds for relevant development activities on state lands in the “wolf townships” corridor. Following on that previous effort, Rep. Jeannette James (R-North Pole) and six other House members sponsored a bill that would remove AIDEA’s bond issuing authority; it would also remove the Authority’s “wolf townships” land grants, and instead transfer those land parcels to the Denali Borough. James’s bill moved quickly and it passed the Alaska House, with only a single dissenting vote, on April 29.⁵⁹

But after holding a hearing on the bill, the Senate Resources Committee chose to not move the bill because the bill was a giveaway of state lands for a private development project. Critics, noting that the bill named Kantishna Holdings, Inc. (which had long espoused a Stampede Road right-of-way), called the bill premature, inasmuch as the

\$1.65 million planning study—which had not yet begun—would compare and contrast a number of potential northern access routes. James and other supporters, however, were able to get the bill moving again. It passed the Resources Committee on May 4, and three days later it passed the Senate on a 13-6 vote. Governor Knowles, weighing the bill’s merits, felt that “the basic premise of this bill ... is in the best interests of the state.” But he vetoed the bill because it would transfer land “of undeniable statewide and national interest to a borough [Denali Borough] which currently lacks adequate authority or capacity to administer transportation services or to conduct land planning and zoning.” James and other legislators angrily denounced Knowles’ veto and vowed to override it during the upcoming legislative session. Sure enough, Senator Loren Lemman moved to overturn the veto on January 16, 2002, and that day both the House and the Senate (by votes of 28-11 and 13-7) had overridden Knowles’s veto and thus passed Representative James’s bill.⁶⁰

Given the passage of both the “TEA-21” bill in 1998 and the state’s matching funds in 2001, state

This open landscape, as seen near Eightmile Lake, is typical of the Stampede Road corridor. NPS Photo



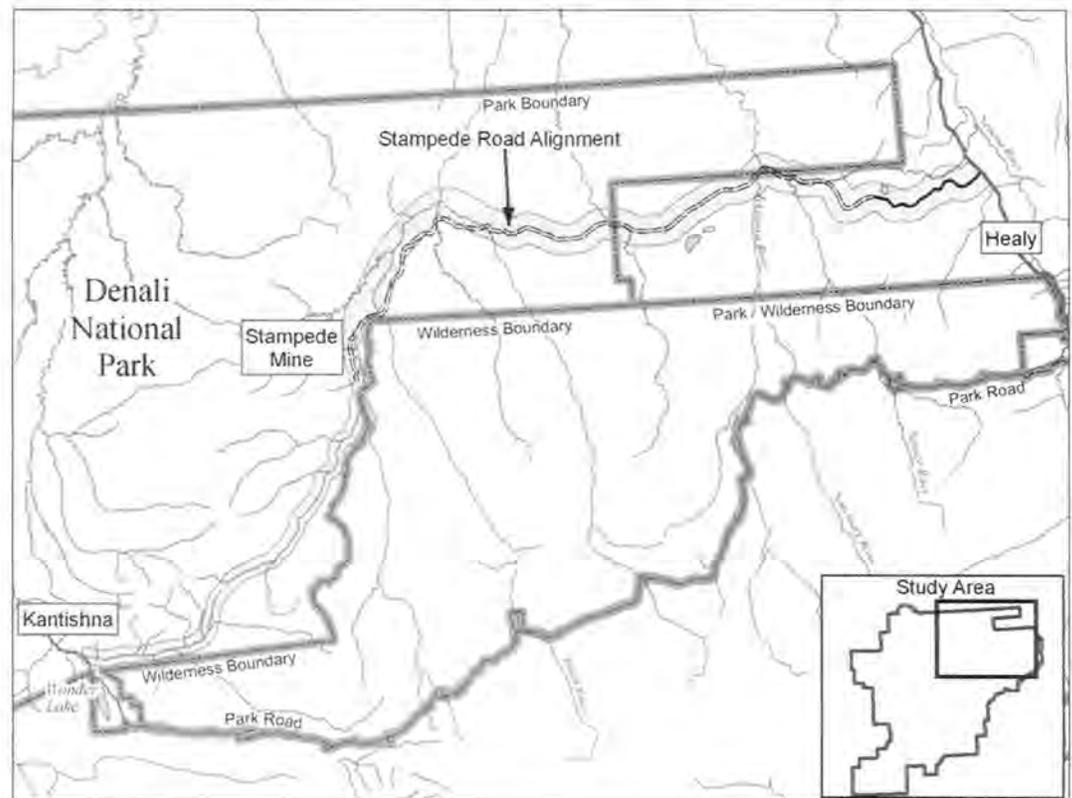
officials moved to start work on the North Denali Access Route Planning and Reconnaissance Study. On March 6, 2002, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities signed a Transfer of Responsibilities Agreement with Denali Borough. Soon afterward, the project's first phase began, and Eileen Armstrong was selected as the borough's study coordinator. In January 2003, Armstrong hosted public meetings in Healy, Fairbanks, and Anchorage, hoping to solicit ideas on the best route to follow between the Stampede Road area and Kantishna.⁶⁰ In April 2003, borough personnel completed a preliminary report. The next step, according to a state DOT&PF official, was the preparation of a more detailed reconnaissance study, and in January 2005, the department was preparing to hire a contractor to "look at the possibility of extending a road or rail line" into the park.⁶²

The study, an effort by CH2MHill, assisted by Dowl Engineers, began that April; it was the subject of an October 2005 open house in Healy, and in August 2006 it was completed. It investigated four possible route alignments between the Parks Highway-Alaska Railroad corridor and Kantishna: the Rex Corridor (beginning just south of Rex), two Rock Creek corridors (both beginning near Ferry), and the Stampede Corridor (beginning just north of Healy). The study examined the economic and environmental feasibility of these corridors as they pertained to trail, road, and rail access. The study was thorough—it was 652 pages long—but the recommendations were less than conclusive. They stated that "no alignment stands out as having a distinct advantage over the others with respect to engineering, environmental, or user-benefit considerations."

It also found, perhaps not surprisingly, that of the three modes studied, a trail offered the smallest footprint, cost, and user benefit and that a railroad had the largest footprint, cost, and user benefit. Based on these findings, "the recommendation at the conclusion of the North Denali Route Reconnaissance Study is to defer further work on the North Denali Access Route project until funding is available for recommended additional studies." (See Map 5.)⁶³

In May 2005, the state legislature—perhaps hoping to stimulate interest in one possible access corridor—provided a \$5 million appropriation (via the FY 2005 supplementary capital budget) to improve the existing Stampede Road, using state funds only, between the Parks Highway and Eightmile Lake. That fall, DOT personnel announced specific plans for the project; they planned to start the eight-mile construction job in the spring of 2006, and hoped to extend the road that summer all the way west to Savage River.⁶⁴ In early 2006, Governor Murkowski requested in his proposed capital budget that the legislature provide the DOT an additional \$9 million that would extend those road improvements to the Denali National Park boundary. The legislature, however, did not accede to that request.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, construction of the initial eight-mile road improvement was held up by DOT's inability to secure Army Corps of Engineer permits.⁶⁶ Murkowski, whose administration pushed for the road improvements, was not re-elected in 2006. Just a month after his successor, Sarah Palin, was sworn into office, the Fairbanks DOT office withdrew its support for the project. Recognizing that many local residents were strongly opposed to the project, DOT official Howard Thies noted

Map 5. This map shows the “Stampede Road Alignment” for planning purposes to identify possible locations for visitor facilities between Healy and the Kantishna area. North Access Visitor Facilities Study, National Park Service and Alaska Department of Natural Resources



that “recreational roads such as the Stampede Road project are going to have to demonstrate a greater need in this time of fiscal restraint.”⁶⁷

Congress gave the NPS further development recommendations in 2001. Because of difficulties designing a visitor center for Glacier Bay National Park, Senator Murkowski recommended that the Interior Department, as part of its appropriations bill, reprogram \$372,000 in NPS funds for a “cooperative study with the State of Alaska to explore the location of campgrounds, trails, and other visitor facilities along the Stampede Road alignment.”⁶⁸ NPS officials and others were perplexed at the senator’s action, inasmuch as the TEA-21 bill, in 1998, had asked the State of Alaska to examine a number of northern access route options. They nevertheless moved to satisfy Congress’s intent. By early 2003, the agency had allocated \$100,000 of those funds to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources to support a coordinator (Michelle Roller) for the study, and by that summer the preparation of a Visitor Facilities Study was well underway. In July 2003 NPS planner Pat Welch, assisted by Roller, hosted a series of public open houses in Fairbanks, Healy, Cantwell, and Anchorage. Given the comments gathered at those meetings, the state and federal agencies jointly completed a draft North Access Visitor Facilities Study in late April 2004 and, after a public comment period, they released a final study four months later. The study recommended that up to ten “nodes of development” should be located along the

proposed Stampede Road alignment between the Parks Highway and the Kantishna/Wonder Lake area; within those nodes, a broad variety of development options—from trails and waysides to a lodge or food service facility—might be considered.⁶⁹ Based on these recommendations, the State of Alaska, at some time in the future, may commence visitor development activities along its portion of the road; development on lands within Denali National Park, however, will be precluded until the construction of a full 90-mile road has been authorized.

Throughout this period, it seemed clear that many Alaska officials—including the state’s Congressional delegation, the state legislature, cities and boroughs up and down the Railbelt, and many local residents—were in favor of a new access route into Denali. Large numbers of Alaska residents, however, were opposed to the idea. Opponents included the Panguingue Creek Homeowners Association (located just west of Healy), the Denali Citizens Council, the Wilderness Society (which in 2000 nominated Denali as one of its “15 most endangered wildlands”), and the National Parks Conservation Association (which in 2001 cited Denali in its annual “10 most endangered parks” listing). Even Taxpayers for Common Sense came out against the proposed road, decrying it as one of the “ten worst highway projects in America.”⁷⁰

The National Park Service, as it had for years, opposed new access. Agency officials continued to

abide by the recommendations contained in the 1986 general management plan, the 1992 Denali Access Study, the 1994 Denali Task Force report, and the 1997 North Access Feasibility Study. As park planning chief Mike Tranel noted in 2003, existing facilities and routes were adequate for the foreseeable future. “We have room for more people on the existing road. ... This is where we would like to focus our immediate efforts.” And recognizing that Congress was in the midst of providing planning and design funds for visitor facilities south of the Alaska Range, Tranel added, “when you ask the bigger question of what’s the best way to provide for more visitor use of Denali National Park, we are saying we think we can do it with the road we have now and with the south side coming on line.”⁷¹

Clashes Over Snowmachine Access

During the 1980s and on into the 1990s, different parts of the park unit—following the dictates of ANILCA and the regulations that followed—offered varying levels of off-road vehicle (ORV) access. In Denali National Preserve and in those parts of Denali National Park that Congress had established in 1980, subsistence users were free to access the park so long as they used “traditional” transportation modes. In addition, these users needed to hail from either one of four designated resident zone communities (Cantwell, Lake Minchumina, Nikolai, or Telida) or—for those who lived outside of these communities—they needed to be holders of a subsistence permit (also known as a 13.44 permit).⁷² Because of administrative action in 1983 (see Chapter 9), federal and state officials recognized that areas within the boundaries of the old Mount McKinley National Park were open to snowmachine access for recreational purposes. Most user groups, however, showed little interest in obtaining snowmachine or other ORV access into the “old park” during this period, either during the 1983–86 general management planning process or for the remainder of the decade. And during much of the 1990s, there was a widespread public belief that snowmobiles could not legally enter this area. But the issue remained low-key throughout this period; snowmachiners never made a public demonstration of entering the “old park,” and NPS officials never publicly stated that the “old park” was closed to snowmobiles, nor did they otherwise attempt to prohibit snowmachine use.⁷³

Beginning in the early 1990s, snowmachines became an increasingly popular form of recreation in Alaska, particularly among Anchorage and Fairbanks residents, and one byproduct of that popularity was an ever-broadening search among its enthusiasts for recreational destina-

tions. By the mid-1990s, snowmachining had become so popular that the Tokositna drainage (primarily on Denali State Park land) was described as a “heavy use” area, and state park staff—citing use conflicts—publicized the need to establish a large “quiet zone”—off-limits to snowmachines—in the hills east of the Parks Highway.⁷⁴ Other snowmachine enthusiasts enjoyed their sport in the newly-added portions of Denali National Park, particularly near the Yentna, Kahiltna, Tokositna and Ruth glaciers and in areas surrounding the Dunkle and Golden Zone mines.⁷⁵ And a few riders, perhaps bolder than others, began to take their snowmachines into the Cantwell Creek and Easy Pass areas of the “old park.”⁷⁶



In the face of snowmobiling’s growing popularity, many NPS officials grew increasingly restive. They recognized that most of the “old park” was designated wilderness, and they also recognized that the “old park”—unlike most of the land that surrounded it—had experienced only light and occasional snowmobile activity over the years; as a result, snowmachines were not a “traditional” way to gain access into the pre-1980 park. They had received ample evidence, based on experience in other national parks, that snowmachine activity had had negative impacts on both wildlife and vegetation, and they also felt that it was an inadvertent oversight in the ANILCA legislation that had sanctioned snowmachine access since 1980. For all those reasons, the NPS personnel in 1996 began crafting regulations that would have closed the “old park” once again to snowmachines.⁷⁷ That effort stalled, but in October 1998, a Joe Gauna article in the newsletter *Alaskan Snow Rider* stated that the author intended

to be back at Anderson Pass as soon as snow allows, as well as Easy Pass and Foggy Pass [all three of which are within the Old Park]. ... The route from Healy via the Stampede Trail to Wonder Lake and the Eielson Visitor Center is quite interesting, I’m told, and I expect to ride it as soon as conditions allow.

Snowmachine tracks in the Broad Pass area attest to the popularity of this activity. NPS Photo



Rangers mark the location of the park boundary with visible signs erected in the snow. Tom Habecker Collection

These and similar *Alaskan Snow Rider* articles re-invigorated the agency's earlier efforts and pushed park officials to protect the park's resources.⁷⁸

On November 10, 1998, the NPS announced that it was temporarily closing the "old park" to snowmachines. Park superintendent Steve Martin stated that the action, which might be in effect for as long as a year,⁷⁹ was necessary because snowmobiles—which in his opinion were not traditional according to the Section 110(a) provisions—damaged wilderness values and clashed with traditional forms of backcountry travel such as skis and dog teams. He tentatively planned to place the ban in effect on December 1. He and other park officials, however, promised to keep an open mind on the matter; they scheduled a series of public hearings and promised to rule, within a year, regarding whether the closure would be made permanent.⁸⁰ Snowmachine users, not surprisingly, howled in protest at the agency's action, and the four public meetings that were held November 22-25 were contentious, well-attended affairs (200 people showed up in Anchorage, and some 400 in Fairbanks) that pitted wilderness advocates against motor sports fans. The public comment deadline, originally

scheduled for December 1, was extended to December 15, and the apparent volume of protests against the proposed rule convinced NPS officials to hold off enforcing the snowmachine ban until early 1999, after it had evaluated the public's written and oral comments.⁸¹

Meanwhile, the U.S. and Alaska legislatures weighed in on the issue. In early December, U.S. Representative Don Young (R-Alaska), who headed the House Resources Committee, wrote an Interior Department official and asked him to drop the proposed regulations. Shortly afterward, Young launched a Resources Committee investigation into "why the agency has apparently misapplied the access provisions" of ANILCA. He asked the Interior Department to provide, by January 8, 1999, any records related to the snowmachine regulations. Officials complied with the House Committee's request; the committee, in response, made no specific actions based on this data.⁸² Also in early 1999, members of both the Alaska House and Alaska Senate submitted nearly identically-worded resolutions that opposed the proposed snowmachine closure. The House resolution, which opposed "the closure of any portion of Denali National Park and Preserve to snowmachine access," never made it beyond

the committee stage, but the Senate's resolution, which more specifically opposed "the closure of the former Mount McKinley portions of Denali National Park and Preserve to snowmachine use," proved uncontroversial. Introduced on January 27, it passed the Senate on February 10 and the House on March 12; two weeks later, Governor Tony Knowles sent it on to the Lieutenant Governor's office for filing.⁸³

During the same period, user groups contemplated whether they should file a lawsuit as a way to stop the regulations from being implemented. On a more pragmatic level, snowmachine groups informed NPS officials that their area of greatest interest was a small area near Cantwell; and in response, Superintendent Martin stated that he was willing to consider opening some areas of the "old park" to snowmachines.⁸⁴

On February 4, 1999, the NPS made its decision in the matter. Trying to reach a reasonable balance between competing groups, agency officials chose to prohibit snowmachine access in most of the "old park," but stated that access would be allowed on a total of 6,500 acres, located in two corridors near Cantwell. One corridor was a 25-mile loop that included Windy Creek and its West Fork, Foggy Pass, and the Cantwell Creek drainage; the other corridor included portions of the Bull River valley. Park officials stated that the order would be in effect for the following year, by which time formal regulations would be in place; in the meantime, the corridor area would be studied to see how snowmachine traffic impacted wildlife and other park values. An Alaska State Snowmobile Association leader was so miffed at the NPS's decision that the group planned to file a lawsuit against the order; conservationists were also disappointed at the ruling, one noting that he needed to "decide on what legal remedies are available."⁸⁵ Both groups, in fact, followed through on their predictions; the snowmobile group filed suit against the Interior Department in U.S. District Court in late February, and in early April a coalition of nine conservation groups also sued the government in hopes of getting the agency to renege on its decision to allow snowmachine access in the "old park."⁸⁶ The cases, which gained nationwide attention, were slated to begin that fall, the thought being that the matter might be resolved before the winter (and the snowmobiling season) began.⁸⁷

In July 1999, the NPS—as it predicted it would in February—moved to formalize its regulations when it announced that it had formulated a Proposed Special Regulations Package. One element of this five-part package stated that the agency planned to "continue the prohibition

on snowmachines [sic] use in the core area of the park ... to protect wildlife and other park resources in the 'Old Park.'" Four months later, after the Office of Management and Budget had completed its review, the agency went through with its plan when it issued its package of regulations (as a so-called "proposed rule") in the *Federal Register*. These regulations called for all of the "old park"—including the 6,500 acres near Cantwell excluded in February—to be closed to snowmobiles, and it also provided a definition of a "traditional activity." Superintendent Martin moved to close these corridors because, according to ANILCA, his February 1999 action allowing snowmachine access in two corridors had not been legal.⁸⁸

Just one day before the Interior Department issued its proposed regulations, the NPS completed an environmental assessment on the damage that snowmachines might cause to vegetation and wildlife in the park's core; in that document, the agency stated that the "permanent closure of the old park to snowmobile use" was its preferred alternative (among four alternatives presented). This document, as well, defined a "traditional activity," using the same definition that appeared in the "proposed rule."⁸⁹

During the same week that the proposed rule and the environmental assessment were released, two major events took place in the lawsuit that the snowmachine groups had filed in late February. The case now pitted the Alaska State Snowmobile Association and three individuals against two Interior Department officials, three NPS officials, and nine environmental organizations. On November 8, Judge John Sedwick issued a Preliminary Order in the case. Basing his decision on what had been filed on both sides, he stated that the NPS's February 4 decision to close most of the "old park" to snowmachine access was "arbitrary and capricious because the absence of any definition of traditional activities necessarily means that the Decision contains no rational basis for the conclusion that the use of snowmachines for traditional activities in the Old Park is detrimental to the resource values of the Old Park." He cautioned, however, that his decision did "not present the court's final order." Recognizing that a court date was set for November 12, Sedwick issued his preliminary order to "assist the parties prepare for and conduct oral argument."⁹⁰

On November 12, the snowmachine industry's lawsuit was adjudicated before Judge Sedwick of the Anchorage District Court. Pertinent questions aired that day included, first, the extent to which snowmachine use would damage the

park, and also the definition of a “traditional” activity. Because Interior Department lawyers could not answer either question to the judge’s satisfaction—their recently-issued “traditional activities” definition was still in the proposal stage—Sedwick ruled on November 18 in favor of the plaintiffs. His final decision, to a large extent, reaffirmed his preliminary order and invalidated the NPS’s eight-month-old snowmachining ban. Park Service officials admitted that they were unsure of the agency’s next steps; they did, however, plan to incorporate the judge’s concerns into the recently-issued proposed rule, which would be subject to public hearings during the following month.⁹¹



Snowmachine tracks lead to upper Cantwell Creek, on the south side of the Alaska Range. NPS Photo

The agency advertised a series of four public meetings on the issue (between December 6 and December 9), with a December 10 public comment deadline. Given that time frame, the NPS hoped to issue a rule as soon as January 2000 that would temporarily ban snowmachines from the “old park” for the remainder of the winter. At the same time, the agency followed up its issuance of the November 10 proposed rule (for a permanent closure) by giving the public until January 11 to comment on its provisions.⁹²

The four meetings—which allowed the public to comment on both the short-term and long-term snowmobile bans—were held as scheduled in communities up and down the Railbelt. About 330 people attended one of the four hearings, and most of the attendees supported the NPS’s proposals. Both sides in the fight, by this time, were fearing the worst; snowmachine advocates felt that an NPS victory would be a prelude to closures on tens of millions of acres of other Alaska parklands, while conservationists openly worried that if snowmachines gained a toehold at Denali’s “old park,” the pristine values of one of Alaska’s most protected, treasured places would be lost.⁹³

Because there were no legal or regulatory prohibitions in place, the “old park” was open to snowmachine enthusiasts throughout the winter of 1999-2000.⁹⁴ In mid-December, Superinten-

dent Martin announced that areas south of the Alaska Range were open if they were below 3,000 feet in elevation.⁹⁵ (Areas north of the mountains, he noted, did not yet have adequate snow cover.) The park, however, would be accessible only to those who engaged in “traditional activities,” whatever that implied.⁹⁶ And in addition, riders would be expected to follow existing NPS regulations regarding snowmobile use; these included a 45 mile-per-hour speed limit, a helmet use requirement, a minimum age limit, and so forth. Given the new reality, riders continued to visit the Bull River, Cantwell Creek, Windy Creek, and other corridors; so far as is known, all snowmachine enthusiasts remained south of the Alaska Range save one group that rode into the Wonder Lake area.⁹⁷

Meanwhile, the agency concentrated on how it would respond to the permanent ban which it had proposed on November 10, 1999. Public comments about the ban, pro and con, were so strong that officials decided to move the comment deadline back from January 11 to January 25.⁹⁸ Two months later, park spokeswoman Jane Tranel noted that the public had overwhelmingly backed the agency’s proposed rule; of more than 6,100 responses to the proposal, 96 percent favored an “old park” snowmachine ban; among the 2,000-plus Alaskan comments, 91 percent favored the ban. During this same period, the National Parks Conservation Association shed additional light on the issue when it nominated Denali as one of its “Ten Most Endangered Parks,” largely due to the perceived snowmachine threat.⁹⁹

Based on the public’s overwhelming support for the proposed rule, the NPS moved to ban snowmobiles from old Mount McKinley National Park. In June 2000, it issued a Statement of Finding¹⁰⁰ which determined “that any snowmachine use in the Old Park would be detrimental due to the unique history and resource values of the area.” The agency also concluded that “there are no traditional activities in the Old Park that utilize snowmachines during periods of adequate snow cover.”¹⁰⁰ Based on these and similar conclusions, the Interior Department moved to permanently close the Old Park to snowmachine use. Assistant Interior Secretary Donald J. Barry issued the final rule on June 19, 2000.¹⁰⁰ Since that time, several violators have been successfully prosecuted under the NPS closure regulations.¹⁰¹

The rule went unchallenged for the next several months, but the November 2000 election brought forth a new, conservative president, George W. Bush. The president-elect’s nominee as Interior Secretary, Gale W. Norton, had

The popularity of snowmachine riding in the Broad Pass area increased dramatically in the 1990s. NPS Photo



previously worked as an attorney in the Reagan administration. Given the apparent change in political winds, the snowmachine industry, which had protested the June 2000 “old park” snowmachine prohibition, renewed its two-year-old lawsuit against the NPS; shortly afterward, a coalition of environmental groups renewed their own lawsuit as well.¹⁰³

Shortly after Bush was sworn into office, Interior Department leaders began discussions with William Horn, the snowmachine industry’s legal representative, over NPS policies at both Yellowstone and Denali national parks. Horn, in mid-April 2001, noted that he was engaged in “preliminary discussions” aimed at settling the industry’s lawsuit. But environmental groups, who had filed their own lawsuit, were not part of those discussions and were “totally kept in the dark” about the progress of those discussions.¹⁰⁴ By the end of April, Horn announced the results of those talks; the industry would drop its lawsuit if the NPS would open up some of the “old park” to recreational snowmachines, and more specifically if the agency agreed to participate in the development of legislation that would allow increased snowmachine access. Upon hearing the news, snowmachine enthusiast Joe Gauna made the groups’ intentions clear: “All we ever wanted is to ride snowmobiles in the southeast corner of the Alaska Range,” near Cantwell. And NPS spokesman John Quinley

averted that the new proposal might be an acceptable compromise.¹⁰⁵

By the end of May, a draft bill had been prepared that would have opened up 300,000 acres of the 1,900,000-acre “old park” to snowmachines. Given that potential legislation, snowmachine groups announced that they were dropping their lawsuit, hoping for a legislative rather than judicial solution. In response, Interior Secretary Norton stated that “the department intends to review in good faith any such introduced legislation.” But a conservation-group spokesman worried that Norton and the snowmachine groups had “cut a deal” to push the draft legislation.¹⁰⁶

A year later, the snowmachiners’ concerns resulted in a renewed attempt at Congressional legislation. On May 7, 2002, Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska) introduced a bill that would open up about one-fifth of the “old park”—approximately 400,000 acres—to recreational snowmachine access. Young, at the time, noted that “this compromise gives each side what they say they want,” but environmentalists vowed to fight his bill.¹⁰⁷ A month later, Sen. Frank Murkowski submitted a similar bill. Neither bill, however, got beyond the committee stage.¹⁰⁸ Early in 2003, Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) indicated an interest in continuing the efforts begun by the other members of the state’s congressional delegation. That interest, however, did not result in a bill submission.¹⁰⁹

Studies were conducted by the National Park Service to guide backcountry management planning for the park. NPS Photo



Beginning in 1999, the NPS began work on a backcountry management plan for the park, and questions regarding access were a major element of that plan. The plan and its evolution is discussed in greater detail in the next section of this chapter. But one of the major elements of the plan dealt with snowmachine regulation; indeed, one of the major reasons for the plan's formulation was the need to manage the growing number of snowmachines using portions of the "new park."¹⁰⁰

Based on that premise, the draft backcountry plan (released in February 2003) created 29 management zones in the "new park" and preserve. In the agency's preferred alternative, all of these zones would be open to qualified subsistence users. But only two of them, plus small portions of two others, would be "concentrated use" areas where "wide corridors would be designated ... for day use and overnight touring and access." A majority of the new park and preserve was composed of "dispersed use" areas that "would allow snowmobile access for subsistence and for a limited number of day and overnight trips by permit." And six units, comprising perhaps one-fifth of the "new park" and preserve, prevented motorized access to all but subsistence users.¹⁰¹

As noted below, there was a massive public response to the draft plan. More than 90 percent

of individual comments supported the agency's proposal; fewer than 1 percent, by contrast, specifically opposed restrictions on snowmachine use in the park and preserve. The State of Alaska, which had gone on record two years earlier to keep the "old park" open to snowmachines, was vehement in its opposition to the plan; state officials had no problem with the NPS's division of the park into management zones (which were a key feature of the plan); they did, however, protest that the prohibition of recreational snowmachines in six management zones was a potential violation of Section 1110(a) of ANILCA. In August 2003, officials from the NPS (led by Deputy Director Randy Jones) and the State of Alaska met to discuss their differences; at that meeting, state officials—whose views were similar to those of Interior Secretary Norton and her assistants—hinted that major changes would be necessary if the NPS wanted to move from a draft to a final plan. As a result, park officials agreed to issue a revised draft plan that, among other changes, would not prohibit snowmachine access anywhere outside of the "old park" but would instead place that access in the broader context of overall management planning.¹⁰²

In the midst of the agency's preparation of the park's revised draft, the "traditional activities" issue—which had been a key element of the 1999-2000 process that had closed snowma-

chine access in the old park—came to the fore as it pertained to land in the new park and preserve. The draft backcountry plan had noted that in the preamble to the June 2000 final regulations, the NPS intended “to define traditional activities and apply such definitions to other park areas, including the remainder of Denali in subsequent processes, such as future rulemakings to implement backcountry management plans.” The draft plan, however, did not recommend a specific definition or the application of an existing definition to areas outside of the old park. NPS officials readily admitted that there was no enforceable definition of “traditional activities” for these areas. As a result, the definition (as it pertained to these areas) was a “can of worms,” according to a park spokesperson, and was unenforceable.¹¹³

The revised draft, released in April 2005, divided the “new park” and preserve into four levels of “management areas.” Management Area A, which allowed the highest level of visitor access and a “diversity of opportunities for wilderness recreational activities,” comprised 17.7 percent of the study area in the agency’s preferred alternative, and no areas were specifically excluded from recreational snowmachine use. The plan, in general, stated that “snowmachine access for traditional activities would continue,” but as in the draft plan, the agency did not try to define the term “traditional activities.” In addition, it stated that “snowmachine access would be managed to meet the standards ... specified for each management area,” and several use corridors were demarcated.¹¹⁴ Conservation groups, frustrated by the change in the agency’s recommendations, complained that the plan gave snowmachines “virtually unlimited access” to the new park and preserve, so they vowed to “devise an alternate management plan.” Not long afterward, they did so.¹¹⁵

The final plan, released in January 2006, reduced the size of acreage allotted to Management Area A from 17.7 percent to 9.2 percent.¹¹⁶ Otherwise, however, the plan continued to state that “snowmachine access for traditional activities would continue.” The agency “would generally allow independent, cross-country travel by any legal means,” and the agency was “committed to providing visitors ... with reasonable access for wilderness recreational activities, traditional activities, and for other purposes...” (No definition of “traditional activities” was provided, however.) More specifically, the plan stated that “racing or high-marking with snowmachines” was “not appropriate at Denali given the park’s statutory guidance.” The plan, with its snowmachine provisions, went into effect in mid-March 2006.¹¹⁷

Cantwell-Area

All-Terrain Vehicle Access Issues

In the midst of the long-running controversy over snowmobiles in the “old park,” a similar battle erupted over subsistence access rights for certain off-road vehicles, used during the summer season, in the “new park.” This new battle was fought in the Cantwell area: more specifically in the Windy Creek, Bull River, and Cantwell Creek drainages, near the scene of similar fights over snowmachine use.

As noted in Chapter 9, regulations written following the passage of ANILCA had specified that Cantwell would be one of four “resident zone communities,” where “persons who have customarily and traditionally engaged in subsistence uses within the national park or monument permanently reside.”¹¹⁸ The implementation of their “customary and traditional” provision, however, demanded a specific determination regarding the extent of that customary and traditional use. Lacking that determination, and given the fact that the State of Alaska enforced the subsistence hunting regulations, Cantwell residents during the 1980s hunted—as they had for decades—in a variety of areas surrounding their village, some of which were within the boundaries of the newly-designated Denali National Park.

During the mid-1980s, as noted in Chapter 9, the NPS underwent a three-year process that resulted in the park’s 1986 *General Management Plan* (GMP). The access provisions of the plan, which to some extent were based on language in ANILCA and the June 1981 regulations, stated that there was no specific provision for “transportation modes other than snowmobiles, motorboats, and other means of surface transportation traditionally employed.” As it applied to the Denali National Park additions, the plan noted that “existing information indicates that specific ORV use has not regularly been used for subsistence purposes.” But it also noted that “any additional information about traditional means will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis” and that “off-road vehicles are permitted for access for subsistence purposes where they can be shown to be a traditional means of access.” (“Traditional activities” were those deemed to have been an established cultural pattern ... prior to 1978 when the unit [Denali National Monument] was established.”) Most Cantwell residents, however, were unaware of the plan’s provisions; this ignorance, to some extent, existed because none of the public meetings during the plan’s preparation had been held there.¹¹⁹

During the 1980s, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)—in response to a process

meted out in Section 805(d) of ANILCA—managed subsistence hunting regulations throughout the state. And more specifically, the on-site regulation of Cantwell-area hunting provisions came each spring, when an ADF&G officer visited the village and issued registration permits for Unit 13 moose and caribou harvesting. But on July 1, 1990, in the wake of the December 1989 McDowell court decision, the federal government assumed jurisdiction over subsistence hunting activities on many of the state’s federal lands. The following spring, Hollis Twitchell, a subsistence specialist for Denali National Park and Preserve, arrived in Cantwell to issue the Unit 13 registration permits. He did much the same job as had his ADF&G predecessor, but with one notable exception: given the language in the park’s 1986 general management plan, all of the permits stated that no all-terrain vehicles would be allowed for subsistence activities in Denali National Park.¹⁴⁰



Advances in ORV technology have allowed an increasing number of subsistence hunters to access areas in the park. NPS Photo

Several Cantwell residents, predictably, chafed at the new provision, and at least some of the residents’ dissatisfaction was based on their opinion that off-road vehicles had been used for subsistence activities in the “new park” prior to 1978. They demanded to know the legal basis for the park’s action, and in 1992, eight local residents responded with affidavits stating that because they had traditionally used off road vehicles for access into the national park, they requested the removal of the ORV restrictions. Superintendent Russell Berry, upon receiving the affidavits, recognized that there was sufficient merit in the residents’ protests that he asked park staff to make an assessment of historical ORV use. Berry held a public meeting in Cantwell on the issue, which

was attended by 16 local residents, and he also requested an open comment period in which a broader range of Cantwell residents might weigh in on their long-term subsistence patterns. Berry transferred to another park before a decision could be made in the matter; his replacement, in the fall of 1994, was Steve Martin.¹⁴¹

When Martin began his tenure, a regional office task force was in the midst of analyzing the agency’s off road vehicle policies. This effort prevented him, for the time being, from making sweeping changes to ORV policy in the Cantwell area. Martin did, however, agree to visit several areas west of Cantwell with two local subsistence users, Lee Basner and Vernon Carlson. (Both men were members of the Denali Subsistence Resource Commission, and both had signed affidavits back in 1992 protesting the NPS’s changed policy.) The field party recognized that portions of several ATV trails either rested on gravel or were denuded of vegetation; other trail segments, however, needed to be protected from further resource damage. As a result of that visit, Martin established an interim policy stating that the agency would not enforce ORV use prohibitions on portions of three area trails: the lower section of the Windy Creek trail, the old airport road (Cantwell Airstrip trail), and a short segment of lower Cantwell Creek. Agency personnel then proceeded to begin writing a draft environmental assessment that would have officially sanctioned use on those trails. That EA was never completed. Even so, park subsistence specialist Hollis Twitchell was authorized to issue ORV use permits over these three routes, and for years afterward, some Cantwell residents had been permitted ORV access for subsistence purposes into portions of the “new park.”¹⁴²

Key to any decision over the legality of ORV use in the Cantwell area was whether local residents had established patterns of subsistence access into the “new park” prior to 1978. To shed more light on this question, the NPS sponsored a 1999 study—a Community Use Profile update—which, among other purposes, would gather data establishing a specific historical context for residents’ subsistence activities. State of Alaska anthropologist William Simeone was asked to undertake the study, and in 2002 he completed it. The study noted that “after World War II people used surplus military vehicles and commercially made all terrain vehicles or ATVs. ... Some of the areas where Cantwell people hunted with ATVs were the Dunkle Hills ... Bull River, and Windy Creek up to the National Park boundary, and Cantwell Creek.” And lands in the “new park” were a key part of local subsistence harvests; as Simeone wrote, “Cantwell residents feel squeezed

between urban Alaska and the National Park Service. Pressure from urban hunters [particularly after the 1971 completion of the Parks Highway] has ... caused game populations to dwindle, especially in areas that were once traditionally used by the residents of Cantwell. As a consequence many Cantwell residents now hunt almost exclusively on National Park lands, which are closed to urban residents."¹²³

By the time Simeone's study was complete, a new park superintendent was in place: Paul Anderson. Not long after Anderson assumed the job in January 2002, Twitchell apprised him of the situation. Anderson, in response, was surprised that such a policy existed without an NPS determination that ORVs were "traditionally employed" for subsistence access, and without accompanying regulations, as provided for by ANILCA. Accordingly, he concluded that the existing policy was likely illegal.¹²⁴ Anderson, in response, made no moves to alter the status quo for the time being, and NPS officials continued the policy that had been set in the mid-1990s. That policy, as noted in Chapter 9, stated that local residents were officially prohibited from entering the "new park" on ORVs for subsistence purposes, but on an informal level, regulations were not enforced on portions of three specific trail segments.¹²⁵

This state of affairs abruptly changed in September 2003, when three Cantwell subsistence hunters rode their ORVs into the area between the Bull River and the Dunkle Hills in the "new park." They inflicted damage on several miles

of tundra vegetation, some of it in wetlands areas.¹²⁶ That winter, Anderson notified local Subsistence Resource Commission (SRC) members that the NPS would no longer allow subsistence hunters to use their ORVs on any trails or areas within the park because they were not "traditionally employed" according to the park's 1986 management plan.¹²⁷

By this time, the SRC was already on record requesting that the NPS reconsider its determination (from the 1986 GMP) based upon evidence provided by Cantwell subsistence users. As a follow-up to that request, Cantwell residents attended an August 2004 SRC meeting and indicated that they had additional information for the park to consider in regard to the "traditionally employed" issue. That same month, park officials visited Cantwell. At a public meeting, they stated that they would establish a Cantwell "traditional use area" that would include the most popular ORV use areas; they then noted that they would conduct a new review of all available information and make a new determination as to whether ORVs were "traditionally employed" in that area by members of the Cantwell Resident Zone Community. (As noted in Chapter 9, Cantwell had been a resident zone community since 1981.) Park officials stated that any sanctioned activities fitting the "traditional" definition needed to have occurred in the specific area for "at least two generations" prior to the withdrawal of the lands as part of the new Denali National Monument on December 1, 1978. This new interpretation, which was based



In September, 2003, three ORVs used during one subsistence hunting excursion created several miles of new ORV tracks, impacting an area of the "new park" west of the Bull River. NPS Photo

In response to increasing resource damage, the NPS began documenting the location and condition of ORV trails. NPS Photo



on the “traditional” definition cited in both the GMP and in 1979 House and Senate reports, irked not only Cantwell residents but also State of Alaska officials and the Alaska Congressional delegation.¹²⁸

Given the looming controversy, NPS officials intensified their interest in resolving the issue. They recognized that in order to accurately determine the status of Cantwell’s “traditional uses” in the newly-expanded national park as part of an upcoming environmental assessment (EA), they needed to gather additional material about the village’s historical subsistence patterns. They therefore asked two anthropologists from the agency’s Alaska Regional Office, Donald Callaway and Rachel Mason, to conduct interviews with area residents. (These interviews would be a logical follow-up to Simeone’s 2002 study.) The researchers, in response, interviewed 17 long-time Cantwell-area residents on various dates between December 2004 and February 2005.¹²⁹

Callaway, on May 12, summarized the results of the transcribed interviews to a meeting of Cantwell residents. Two months later, the interviews served as the keystone of a large NPS report that discussed historical patterns of ORV use by Cantwell-area subsistence users. The report’s purpose was to help determine “whether there was traditional ORV access for subsistence purposes by the Cantwell community to Denali National Park Lands in the Cantwell area.” The

interviews confirmed that, indeed, there had been “multi-generational use utilizing ORV technologies for the Cantwell area with some families demonstrating as much as three or even four generations.” The findings, in a detailed fashion, corroborated what Simeone had noted three years earlier. Specifically, the report stated that the first ORVs had been Willys Jeeps, used during the 1940s, after which several other ORV types were introduced, in stages, between the 1950s and ANILCA’s passage in 1980.¹³⁰

Based on the conclusions in the Callaway-Mason report, the NPS assembled a brief report that determined whether specific ORV use areas near Cantwell were “traditional.” That “traditionally employed” study, completed on July 22, stated that the NPS would allow subsistence ORV use by Cantwell residents in a 32,159-acre “traditional use area” of the New Park that would comprise the Windy Creek, Cantwell Creek, and Bull River drainages. (According to a news report, areas west of the Bull River did not meet “traditional” standards.)¹³¹ As noted above, NPS officials had decided in August 2004 how “traditional,” in a general sense, would be defined. The report completed on July 22, however, provided three specific criteria that would be used to determine whether or not ORVs were “traditionally employed” in the various drainages west of Cantwell.¹³²

The following day—Saturday, July 23—the park superintendent concurred in the study’s find-

ings, and the agency ruled “that ORV’s have been traditionally employed for access for subsistence purposes by residents in the Cantwell area of the ANILCA park additions to Denali National Park and Preserve.” But “to protect sensitive park resources in this area from adverse impact by ORV’s,” the agency simultaneously decided “to temporarily close portions of the areas to ORV use while studies and a permanent management plan are being developed.” This 120-day closure, which was sufficient to cover the 2005 hunting season as it pertained to ORV use, covered all of the “traditional use area” except for three trails because they “were considered stable enough that they would not exhibit adverse impacts.” (These three were the Windy Creek trail, the Cantwell Airstrip trail, and the Cantwell Creek trail.) Agency officials scheduled a public hearing at Cantwell for Monday, July 25; at that meeting, they discussed the issue with local residents and explained the rationale for their actions.¹³³

An NPS team, with employees from both the park and the regional office, then began to compile an environmental assessment outlining several alternatives for managing subsistence ORV use in those portions of the “new park” located near Cantwell. In December 2005, the agency mailed out a scoping letter and held open meetings on the subject in both Cantwell and Anchorage. By March 2006, the team had emerged with a newsletter outlining five preliminary management alternatives; it also announced additional public meetings on the subject, to be held April 4-5 in Cantwell and Anchorage, respectively. The NPS, at this point, had not publicly identified a preliminary alternative. But after a contentious process, the agency in August issued an internal review draft of the environmental assessment. None of the alternatives outlined in that document was announced as the agency’s preferred alternative; the document did, however, note that Alternative 4 [which would close the entire Cantwell traditional use area to ORV use, although the NPS would encourage the implementation of a winter subsistence hunt by snowmachine] “is the environmentally preferred alternative because it would have the fewest impacts to the biological and physical environment.”¹³⁴

Because the public process was still in flux, NPS officials decided to again issue a 120-day closure order as they had in August 2005; this order likewise allowed ORV access along the same three designated routes, and it was likewise preceded by a public hearing held in Cantwell (on August 1), where local residents were invited to apply for subsistence hunting permits. At the Cantwell meeting, NPS officials stated that the agency’s

environmental assessment for the permanent ORV management plan would be completed by the end of the calendar year.¹³⁵ Other matters intervened, however, and it was not until June 4, 2007 that the agency issued its *Environmental Assessment for Managing Off-road Vehicle Use for Subsistence in the Cantwell Area*. The document offered four access alternatives. The preferred NPS alternative called for the continued ORV use of the Cantwell Traditional Use Area by qualified subsistence users, so long as they remained on specific, designated trails and routes. The alternative also called for the Park Service and the Federal Subsistence Board to work cooperatively on implementing a winter subsistence moose hunt.

The NPS invited the public to comment on the proposal throughout July. A well-attended, slightly contentious meeting was held in Cantwell on July 9, and the agency held a second meeting in Anchorage three days later. Following the public comment period, park staff prepared a document that, with minor changes, mirrored the recommendations set forth in the agency’s preferred alternative. This document, called a “Finding of No Significant Impact” for the previously-published environmental assessment, was approved by Regional Director Marcia Blaszk on September 18. Agency staff then set to work on drafting regulations to implement the recommendations in that document.¹³⁶

Backcountry Management Planning

As noted in Chapter 8, the first planning specifically related to the park’s backcountry took place in the early- to mid-1970s, shortly after the park had begun regulating traffic over the park road. Due to a boom in backpacking activity and the environmental impacts of that activity, park officials concluded that there was “a need for direct onsite management” in areas of the (old) park that were remote from the road corridor. By the spring of 1974, staff had established 31 backcountry zones and provided maximum overnight use limits for each zone; in addition, the park that year hired the first seasonal backcountry rangers.

During the succeeding decade, the popularity of Denali’s backcountry continued to increase. Park staff, in reaction, increased the number of backcountry zones in the “old park” from 31 to 39, and four additional zones were established in the Kantishna Hills portion of the “new park.” But given the use limitations, an increasing number of backpackers were unable to visit their areas of interest, and some were unable to overnight in the park at all. Backcountry issues, moreover, were omitted almost entirely from the park’s general management planning process of

Backcountry rangers are tasked with a number of responsibilities, including monitoring natural and cultural resource conditions in remote areas. The ranger above checks the Stony Creek Patrol Cabin, built in 1926, one of the early ranger patrol cabins along the northern park boundary. NPS Photo, Kennels Collection



1983–86. Indeed, the only major backcountry-related agency actions during this period were those that led to the preparation of a review of the park's wilderness eligibility. As noted in Chapter 9, this process, which was completed in 1988, resulted in a recommendation that of 3,726,343 acres in the park's wilderness study area. The agency recommended that about 60 percent of it—or 2,254,293 acres—should be added to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

After the completion of two other major park plans (dealing with the so-called “front country” and the south side), the time was ripe for a reconsideration of how the backcountry—which comprised 98 percent of the total area in the combined park and preserve—should be managed. Park officials recognized that all aspects of the park's backcountry were popular: individual backpacking parties continued to fill most if not all available slots during much of the summer season, mountaineering visitation increased, and guided backcountry trips became so popular that the number of licensed backcountry operators increased from 36 in 1993 to 64 in 1996. Many of the activities undertaken by these operators were minimally regulated, but others—such as Kantishna-area hiking services, hunting guide services, river trip guide services, and various dog sled services—were regulated by concessions permits rather than incidental business permits (IBPs). The use of concessions permits allowed the NPS to establish a ceiling on the number of operators; the action did nothing, however, to regulate the number of visitors who were served by those operators.¹⁷

NPS officials were concerned about the continued growth in the number of flights to Kahiltna Glacier, Ruth Glacier, and similar nearby locations. Hoping to “prevent this place from becoming another Grand Canyon,” NPS officials in 1997 decided to limit the number of air taxi and flightseeing tour operators to the eight currently IBP holders by issuing concession permits to them. That action, by itself, did not limit air traffic, but agency officials let it be known that the number of annual glacier landings might be restricted in the not-too-distant future. Local air taxi operators, proudly independent, had varying reactions to the proposal; as one of them noted, “In some ways, ... it's kind of nice because it gives you limited competition ... but I don't know, I don't think that's really the way that America was based.”¹⁸ The limitation was implemented in the spring of 1998.

Because of growing backcountry visitation—and more specifically because of a spike in the number of climbers, snowmachiners, flightseeing tourists and air taxi patrons—agency officials recognized the need for a broad planning effort. The agency thus started the process “to address the rapidly growing level and diversity of uses, resource management needs, and the anticipated demand for future uses not foreseen or addressed in the 1986 General Management Plan.” Park superintendent Steve Martin's appraisal was honest and to the point: “It isn't that we have a lot of problems right now, but we need to plan ahead to know where we're going, so it's not just whoever gets there first wins.” Martin envisioned that the plan would likely set up zones for

different types of park experiences, from quiet and remote to potentially noisy or crowded; he anticipated that one result of the plan might be a limit on the number of flightseeing trips per day or on the annual number of Mount McKinley climbers.¹³⁹ (Specifics of the plan's impact on the snowmachine activity is detailed in the section above, while the plan's treatment of park mountaineering is detailed in Chapter 13.)

Park planner Mike Tranel began his work on the plan (originally conceived as a winter use plan) in the spring of 1998, and it was announced to the public in early September 1999. A series of four "open house scoping sessions" followed between October 11 and October 14, and the public was given until November 15 to send in comments, both about "who uses what in the park" and about what the final plan should recommend. The agency, at that time, had hoped to issue a draft plan in September 2000.¹⁴⁰ But for reasons related to the impending 2000 elections, progress on the plan was delayed for about a year. By January 2001, park officials had compiled a series of five preliminary management alternatives and announced five meetings—to be held between February 12 and February 21—where the public could weigh in on the plan's progress. After a March 15 public comment deadline, officials began preparing an internal review draft of the plan. During and after this process, the interested public was kept informed of progress on the plan, primarily via periodic updates in the park's newsletter.¹⁴¹

Throughout 2002, park officials compiled a new version of the draft plan, which was released to

the public in mid-February 2003.¹⁴² The document, which was formally called the park's *Backcountry Management Plan, General Management Plan Amendment, Environmental Impact Statement*, was so massive that the agency simultaneously released an executive summary which was one-tenth as long. The draft plan, which was intended to "describe the future for glacier landings, air taxi operators, the number of climbers on Mount McKinley and managing snowmachining in the park additions,"¹⁴³ took the same general direction as had the public meetings two years earlier, but it provided a far more detailed view of what the various alternatives envisioned and what their impacts would be on the multitude of park resources. Of the five outlined scenarios, the NPS's "preferred alternative" (Alternative D) called for a balance between consumptive and non-consumptive activities. (Alternatives B and C had emphasized wilderness values and opportunities for solitude, while Alternative E called for expanded visitor services, additional facilities, and greater motorized access.)

As noted in the section on snowmachine management (above), alternatives B through E (i.e., all but the no-action alternative) divided the new park and the preserve into 29 management areas. Three types of use levels were delineated. The "natural area," the most restrictive classification, provided for "wilderness recreation with outstanding opportunities for solitude;" "primitive areas" provided for "high quality wilderness experience with a range of options for access;" and "backcountry areas" offered "opportunities for backcountry experience for a range of users."



Planning for management of the park's backcountry use began in earnest in 1998. Photo © Kennan Ward, NPS Interp. Collection, #5573



During the park's backcountry use planning effort, it was recognized that the number of climbers on Mt. McKinley would increase. NPS Photo

The agency's preferred alternative called for the designation of 11 zones, containing 58.4 percent of the area in question, to be "natural areas;" all or part of 16 zones, containing 36.2 percent of the study area, to be "primitive areas;" and 2 zones, plus a portion of 2 others, were "backcountry areas" which comprised 5.4 percent of the study area. The plan also recommended some changes to use patterns in the "old park;" due to the surge in mountaineering activity, the number of backcountry units was increased from 39 to 46, and a "mountaineering special use area" was recommended for the small but popular route corridor between the Kahiltna Glacier base camp and the Mount McKinley summit.¹⁴⁴

Given the new zone-based system, which was an extension of the Old Park backcountry units that had been established in 1974, the agency made a number of recommendations to allow high-quality park visits to continue despite the increasing visitor volumes. Hiking groups, for example, would be limited to 12 to 15 people; motorboats would be allowed on some rivers but not on others; recommendations were made for designated

air taxi landing areas; short loop trails would be established, in high-use areas, to prevent resource degradation; additional visitor facilities and trails were proposed in the entrance and headquarters areas; and a public lands information center was proposed in the Cantwell-Broad Pass area.¹⁴⁵

After releasing the plan, the agency scheduled a series of seven informational meetings and public hearings at various Railbelt locations. Plans originally called for a May 7 public comment deadline, but by the time the meetings were held in late April, the level of public interest was sufficiently great that the deadline had been pushed back to May 30.¹⁴⁶ Agency officials, at that time, hoped to have a final plan ready by early 2004. But in the midst of the comment period, state legislative leaders announced that they were objecting to the plan. Senate President Gene Therriault (R-North Pole) stated that the plan contained "references to restricting access to areas of the park because it could impact somebody's feeling of isolation." Given those references, he protested because "when ANILCA was passed

... traditional access was only supposed to be restricted when it was detrimental to the resource itself.” House Speaker Pete Kott (R-Eagle River) offered a similar concern. Therriault and Kott recognized that while solitude was an attraction, it should not be considered a resource; instead, they noted, “resources are physical, tangible resources such as fish and wildlife, water, air, soils and vegetation.”¹⁴⁷

The sheer volume of the public response—the agency received 9,370 comments on the plan between mid-February and late May—plus the “many substantive comments that recommended changes in the approach of the plan” caused NPS officials to reconsider some of the notions that they had put forth in the draft plan. As alluded to in the section above, protests from the State of Alaska related to access—related to snowmachines, a limitation on airplane landings, and registration requirements for overnight users—caused NPS officials to reconsider the project.¹⁴⁸ “After careful consideration,” therefore, “the NPS concluded that [the] alternatives presented in the draft would require significant modification to respond to the range of interests expressed in public comment.” In late July 2004, the agency declared its intention to write a revised draft of the park’s backcountry management plan. (As noted in the *Federal Register*, the agency’s “decision to revise the plan is in response to public comment ... which indicated the need for revised management area descriptions and additional actions.”) The new plan would “present four new

action alternatives” that responded to specific public comments; these alternatives would “broaden the range of potential actions, clarify the descriptions of management areas, and describe methodologies for managing access to the park and preserve.”¹⁴⁹

During the next few months, NPS officials spoke with various major user groups about their opposition to the draft plan. The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, which represented private pilots, railed against the prohibition against airplane landings (save for emergencies) in the Old Park; in response, the prohibition was lifted, although NPS officials reserved the right to regulate this activity in the future. Point-to-point air taxi operators were able to move from a series of prescriptive actions (as stated in the draft plan) to a series of desired conditions. And scenic air tour operators, who had grumbled that the NPS was on the verge of setting up a quota system, were able to work out a system in which their activities were governed by encounter rates and activity levels rather than simple volume. A final area of contention dealt with climbing. Here, as noted in greater detail in Chapter 13, language in the draft remained; American Alpine Club leaders, despite initial protests, came to recognize that an annual limit of 1,500 climbers made sense.¹⁵⁰

On April 20, 2005, the NPS announced the completion of its revised draft plan. This plan, like its predecessor, offered five alternatives for



Ranger-led day hikes represent another park user group. NPS Photo

the future management of the park's backcountry. As suggested by the agency's efforts after the draft plan's issuance, planners made numerous changes to the park's draft plan. As noted in a press release describing the plan,

The revised draft focuses on setting goals for visitor experience and resource protection for different regions of the backcountry. The [agency's] preferred alternative provides for increased access to the park and preserve backcountry and proposed almost no initial limitations to existing airplane or snowmachine access. Areas for commercial airplane landings are clearly defined. The preferred alternative calls for monitoring visitor experience and resource conditions, and identifies both voluntary and regulatory steps that could be taken to manage access if monitoring demonstrates that goals are not achieved.¹⁵¹

The agency's revised draft abandoned the 25-zone management system that had been featured in the earlier draft, and instead of a three-tiered hierarchy of "backcountry," "primitive," and "natural" areas, the new plan divided the new park and preserve into 48 backcountry units which would be managed in five general gradations of use. These use classifications would be called areas A through E. Area A was to "provide a diversity of opportunities ... that are relatively accessible to day-users and to those who have limited wilderness travel skills or equipment, and Area E—at the other end of the scale—would

"provide opportunities for extended expeditions in remote areas where other parties and signs of civilization would generally not be encountered." Areas B and D offered a gradation between these two extremes, while Area C specifically provided "opportunities for climbing and mountaineering in a wilderness setting."

Given those criteria, each of the four action alternatives divided up the new park and preserve into one of the five management areas. As in the draft plan, the third action alternative (Alternative 4 in this case) was the NPS's preferred alternative; as before, the first and second action alternatives emphasized protection to a relative extent, and the fourth action alternative emphasized expanded visitation and greater motorized access.

Perhaps because the NPS's preferred alternative was less restrictive than two other plan alternatives, it did not recommend that any acreage for the Area E classification. Instead, it classified more than one-sixth of the study area (17.7 percent) as Area A and another 8.2 percent as Area B. About two-thirds of the study area (68.3 percent) was assigned to the relatively restrictive Area D. Land allotted specifically for climbing and mountaineering (Area C) would comprise the remaining 6.3 percent of the study area. Also included in the plan was a large Ruth Glacier Special Use area, within Area A, that provided for "high use of transportation services" for those accessing the Ruth Amphitheatre between May and August. Inasmuch as most near-term visitation was anticipated in the three different units marked Area A, the plan allowed for

At the Backcountry Desk in the Visitor Access Center, backcountry rangers provide information to hikers about units available, hiking conditions and safety. They facilitate backcountry management by issuing overnight backcountry permits and bear resistant food containers to backpackers. In 2005 this function moved just outside the renamed Wilderness Access Center. Photo © Kennan Ward, NPS Interp. Collection, #4612



growth “along the park road in the Old Park and Kantishna; at the Ruth, Tokositna, and Kahiltna Glaciers; and in the Dunkle Hills/Broad Pass area.” The revised draft gave specific use limits for each of 75 backcountry units: 46 units in the old park, 4 new-park units (in the Kantishna Hills) that had long operated under use limits, and 25 additional, newly-established units in the new park and preserve. The plan made many additional recommendations regarding access, commercial services, backcountry facilities, and administrative and scientific activities.¹⁵²

When the revised plan was released, the NPS announced that it would be holding public meetings in five Railbelt communities; these meetings, which would include a formal public hearing, would be held between June 8 and June 15. The public, at first, was asked to submit comments by June 27; that deadline was later extended to June 30, and still later to July 15.¹⁵³ The deadlines were extended because the public responded to the revised draft even more than it had to the original draft; in all, the NPS received 15,198 public comments, almost 6,000 more than it had received two years earlier. More than 96 percent of the comments were form letters, most of which came from adherents to various environmental organizations.¹⁵⁴

In response to the “overwhelming” public interest in the plan, the agency made numerous changes to the revised draft; the public comments, which (according to park Supt. Paul Anderson) “resulted in a much stronger and more refined management plan than would have been possible otherwise,” were reflected in the final backcountry plan, which was released to the public in January 2006.¹⁵⁵ In order to be as transparent as possible, the agency took the unusual step of including, on a word-for-word basis, all text that had been either added to, or deleted from, the revised draft plan. There were, therefore, a large number of changes, of both a substantive and technical nature. Overall, however, the public had a less contentious response to the revised draft than it had had to the draft.¹⁵⁶

In the final plan, the new “modified” preferred alternative kept the same four-tiered management classification as before¹⁵⁷ and defined the four tiers the same way, but many changes were made to the management philosophy to be applied to specific areas. For example, a large area just east of Ruth Glacier was moved from Area A to either Area B or Area C, and acreage north of the Dunkle Hills was moved from Area A to Area B, and a large area on both sides of the road in the Kantishna area was also moved from Area A to Area B. On the other hand, a vast swath of

land in the northern park addition east of Moose Creek from Area D to Area B. The result of these reclassifications meant that acreage managed as Area A comprised 9.2 percent of the new park and preserve (down from 17.2 percent in the revised plan), but Area B comprised another 24.8 percent of the study area (up from 8.2 percent). Acreage in the relatively restrictive Area D classification declined from 68.3 percent to 57.9 percent, while lands allotted to climbers and mountaineers constituted 8.1 percent of the study area, up from a recommended 6.3 percent in the revised draft. The agency also made several other modifications dealing with commercial services, backcountry facilities, and administrative and scientific activities.¹⁵⁸

The issuance of the plan marked the beginning of a 30-day no action period. On February 21, shortly after the conclusion of that period, Acting Regional Director Victor Knox issued a record of decision, after which the NPS began implementing the plan.¹⁵⁹ Easing the agency’s management challenges during its eight year planning effort was the relative lack of growth in backcountry visitation; the number of annual overnight stays, for example, declined from 39,224 in 1998 to 34,016 in 2004 and to 28,623 in 2006. The number of commercial operators licensed to bring visitors into the park has similarly declined, from 64 in 1996 to 53 in 2006.¹⁶⁰

South Side Planning Efforts

During the 1980s and early 1990s, the NPS and the State of Alaska had cooperated on several proposals related to facilities development south of the Alaska Range. (See Chapter 9.) During the mid-1980s, as part of the park’s general management planning process, the two governments had recommended a hotel/visitor center complex at the south end of Curry Ridge, located in Denali State Park. In 1989, as part of the state park’s master planning process, the state—supported by the NPS—recommended facilities at High Lake at the state park’s northern end, near the intersection of the Alaska Railroad and the Parks Highway, plus a small lodge in the Tokositna area. Shortly afterward, the NPS began work on its South Slope Development Concept Plan (DCP). In 1991, an environmental assessment was released that included plans for a large hotel and visitor center, just south of Talkeetna, on land owned by the Cook Inlet Regional Corporation. Additional site studies were completed in 1992.

By May 1993, when the NPS issued its draft DCP, it had downplayed the idea of constructing a south-side hotel. Instead, the agency’s preferred alternative advocated two development sites: an initial visitor center to be located just north of

where the Parks Highway bridged the Chulitna River and, if conditions warranted, a visitor center and possible hotel complex near Talkeetna. Despite the fact that the plan treated Talkeetna as a second-tier development site, area residents fought the plan so stridently that park superintendent Russell Berry stepped in and stopped the planning process. Soon afterward, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt recommended the establishment of the so-called Denali Task Force to investigate south slope development, among other park-related topics. The task force report, issued in October 1994 and approved by the advisory board two months later, recommended small visitor centers at three south slope sites: Tokositna, Byers Lake, and Talkeetna. (See Map 3.) Its approach, however, differed from previous plans in that “all major landowners and interest groups ... must be involved in development planning to ensure that visitor centers, lodging and access improvements are coordinated.” And it further recommended that “lodging and other primarily commercial facilities should only be developed on private lands.” A top-down approach, in which federal and state interests dictated the direction of area development, would no longer work; in its place a more cooperative planning effort was needed that included key stakeholders and local communities.

Just a few weeks after the Denali Task Force issued its report, the Alaska Region’s new regional director, Bob Barbee, visited the park and met with acting park superintendent Steve Martin and his staff. Well aware that the south slope planning process was at a standstill, Barbee arranged for the park to hire Nancy Swanton to put new life into the plan. Before long, Swanton began meeting with a host of other players—the state, two boroughs, and two Native corporations—on a more cooperative planning effort, which eventually became the *Revised Draft Development Concept Plan* and environmental impact statement for Denali’s south side.¹⁰¹

Soon after Swanton began her work, private sector developers at long last began to seize the economic potential of various sites in the south side planning area. As noted in Chapter 9, development interests as far back as June 1987 had announced plans for a lodge and convention center at a site just north of the Chulitna River bridge. Those plans gained new traction in early 1995 when Leonard “Sonny” Kragness, the owner of a 146-acre parcel just north of the bridge, sold his parcel to Princess Tours, one of Alaska’s largest cruise tour operators.¹⁰² That August, the company announced that it would build a large new hotel on the parcel. A press release noted that the hotel would be marketed to “independ-

ent travelers and those who come on cruise, bus and other package tours.” Princess Tour officials doubtless knew that the March 1993 draft DCP recommended a 10,000-square-foot visitor center in the same general area, but there is no indication that the tour company’s hotel plans were predicated on the visitor center’s construction. Instead, the company’s motives were entirely pragmatic; its business volume was increasing, and it knew that it had a limited range of expansion possibilities at its existing hotel property (the Denali Princess Lodge) at the park’s eastern entrance. Company personnel were well aware that the hotel would be “the first major tourist development on the south side of Mount McKinley.” They were also well aware that the hotel’s major selling point was its location “41 miles from the peak with an unlimited view, weather permitting.” By midsummer 1996, construction work on the new hotel—to be called the Mount McKinley Princess Lodge—was underway. The 162-room, \$25 million lodge opened on schedule in mid-May 1997, just in time for the summer tourism season. This hotel is still in operation; it is now called the McKinley Princess Wilderness Lodge and has more almost tripled in size to 460 rooms.¹⁰³

This long-sought private-sector development further supported the need for additional federal and state planning efforts for that area. As noted above, park planner Nancy Swanton led the agency’s efforts toward producing a revised draft of the South Side DCP, and in May 1995, a newly-assembled cooperative planning team began meeting on a monthly basis. Late that August, the agencies hosted a series of public open houses at various Railbelt points.¹⁰⁴ That October the various agencies announced—before the revised draft was completed—that their preferred alternative would include, as its centerpiece, “an upgrade and extension of the Petersville Road, and a new visitor center at the end of the Petersville Road upgrade in the western end of Denali State Park overlooking the Tokositna Glacier.” The planned visitor center would be just three miles from the national park boundary. In March 1995, the agencies released a revised draft DCP and environmental impact statement. As predicted, the focus of the new plan was “the Tokositna area of Denali State Park”—specifically the Ramsdyke Creek and Long Point area—where “a large visitor center (up to 13,000 square feet)” was planned along with a 50-site campground, up to four public use cabins, and several trails. The plan also called for the development of “visitor facilities and services at Talkeetna, Broad Pass, and in the central development zone of Denali State Park [i.e., the Byers Lake vicinity] when the need and op-

On a clear day from the proposed visitor center site in the Peters Hills, the view looking up the Tokositna Glacier toward Mt. McKinley is spectacular. NPS Photo



portunity to do so are established.” But perhaps because Princess Tours had already announced the construction of a hotel at the south end of the state park, the south side plan did not call for a new agency-funded or agency-constructed hotel. The NPS estimated that implementing the proposal would cost about \$42.9 million, \$30 million of which would be spent on rebuilding and extending the Petersville Road.¹⁶⁵

Soon after the plan was distributed, the intergovernmental team began holding a series of public hearings on the plan; these took place in six Railbelt communities between April 16 and April 25, 1996. Plan backers hoped that the cooperative nature of the plan’s development—with federal, state, borough, and Native representation—would pave the way toward its eventual approval. But an Anchorage news reporter predicted that “if previous Denali plans are a guide, controversy is likely.” That prediction came true. Agencies received hundreds of written comments in response, plus additional testimony at the hearings. Although one conservation group felt that the plan was “on the right track,” many of the comments were heavily critical of the plan. So strong was the criticism that the agency scheduled a seventh hearing (on May 15), and the original comment deadline of May 21 was pushed back to June 5.¹⁶⁶

In November the assembly for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough—which was one of the plan’s major partners—met to pass a resolution supporting the plan. But it ran into a wall of opposition, with 60 people denouncing the plan and just one supporting it. After a three-hour

hearing, assembly members decided to postpone their vote. Two weeks later, the assembly postponed the matter again. Those who opposed the plan, according to one news report, were an “unusual coalition” of pro-development business owners, local politicians, environmental groups and Petersville-area mine claimants. Their primary argument was that choosing the Tokositna site was too expensive (\$44 million, as opposed to a \$9 million plan that included a visitor center along the Parks Highway near Byers Lake) and that the proposal would ruin an area that was used “only by the more adventuresome people.” Both backers and opponents of the plan circulated petitions; more than 60 Trapper Creek residents signed one supporting the plan, but an anti-plan petition garnered more than 100 signatures. The NPS, during this period, backed the idea because it gave people more places to go in the park, because it was a “superior destination” that offered a wilderness experience, and because it promised to relieve pressure on the often crowded eastern entrance. As such, it was cast in the somewhat unusual position of backing development and road construction against the wishes of environmentalists.¹⁶⁷

On January 7, 1997, the Mat-Su Borough Assembly addressed the matter again and voted 7-0 to support the plan despite “overwhelming testimony” against it. More than 100 local residents, by this time, had signed petitions favoring the project, but “about five times that number” opposed it. Project opponents, claiming that “the will of the people” had been thwarted, vowed to lobby state and federal officials to prevent the project from being funded.¹⁶⁸ The NPS and its partners,

meanwhile, completed their work on the final DCP. The new plan, released in late January, was largely similar to the revised draft. One of the major changes was a 60 percent reduction in the size of the Tokositna visitor center, to 5,000 square feet rather than 13,000 square feet. In addition, the visitor center's completion date was pushed back from 2000 to 2002, and other changes were recommended as well.¹⁶⁹

The completion of the plan, however, did not squelch the voice of the plan's dissenters, and in April this group—which was now composed of environmentalists, hunters, miners, mushers and snowmachiners—met and formed the Coalition for Responsible South Denali Development. The group held a May 1 press conference in Anchorage and recommended that planners save \$35 million by building a visitor center along the Parks Highway near Byers Lake. NPS officials countered that such a center would not solve congestion at the northern entrance, nor would it offer much of a wilderness experience. But according to one news report, coalition members protested NPS plans because they “would simply provide a place for ‘industrial tourism’ to dump more tourists to the detriment of Alaska recreationists and those few guides selling wilderness experiences.”¹⁷⁰ Alaska's congressional delegation, during this period, was less than enthusiastic about implementing the plan, both because of local opposition and because its primary park-area development efforts were then being directed toward the construction of a new northern route into Kantishna.

As the controversy continued over the 1997 DCP, substantial modifications were made to address public concerns. To address implementation of the south side plan, Governor Knowles in 1997 chartered the twelve-member South Denali Citizens Consultation Committee, which included representatives from many of the same south side communities and interested user groups that had fought over the failed 1996-1997 plan. The committee, at first, met monthly. For most of its first year of existence, however, this committee was generally unsuccessful in accomplishing its goals.

Meanwhile, private sector developments continued. In May 1997, as noted above, Princess Tours' new lodge near the Chulitna River bridge opened for business, and soon afterward another well-funded tourism operator decided to locate a lodge in the vicinity. Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI), which was the Native regional corporation in much of southcentral Alaska, began in 1997 to make major investments in the Alaska tourism industry; and in 1998 it formed a subsidiary, Alaska Heritage Tours, to oversee its Alaska

businesses and sell package tours. That same year, CIRI's top tourism official, Dennis Brandon, noted that the area just south of Denali National Park was ripe for development because of the crowded conditions at the park's main entrance in the north. Based on those conditions, and in hopes of also appealing to those seeking a weekend getaway from Anchorage, CIRI decided to construct a new, 98-room lodge just south of Talkeetna. (As noted in Chapter 9, a visitor center—to be located on CIRI land and adjacent to a yet-to-be-built CIRI-sponsored hotel—had been a key part of NPS plans between 1990 and 1994. But protests from Talkeetna residents had halted any further visitor center plans.) In May 1999, the new Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge opened for business. Since then, the lodge has more than doubled its capacity; it now offers 212 rooms to the touring public.¹⁷¹

Because the decision on where to locate the area's major visitor center was still being debated, governmental officials during this period were uncertain whether Petersville Road would be a major tourist access corridor. Despite that uncertainty, Matanuska-Susitna Borough Officials worked with local residents and, in August 1998, finalized a Petersville Road Corridor Management Plan. One of the plan's elements was to enhance the visitor experience for Petersville Road users; to that end, the plan included provisions for interpretive panels, informational kiosks, vegetative buffers, and retention of scenic qualities along the road corridor.¹⁷²

In early 1999, after almost a year of inaction, government leaders once again showed an interest in producing a viable plan for Denali's south side. Attaining a unified plan proved difficult, but in March 1999 the SDCCC unveiled a draft proposal that was aired at a public meeting in Wasilla. The plan was similar to the final South Side DCP in that it featured a modest visitor center (of up to 5,000 square feet) three miles southwest of Long Point. Instead of a nearby campground and parking lot, however, these facilities would be located 10 miles away, near Forks Roadhouse; access between the roadhouse and the visitor center, via a proposed two-lane road, would be limited to shuttle buses. The committee's plan also called for a visitor center along the Parks Highway near Byers Lake.¹⁷³ In mid-December 1999, the committee issued its final report, which was definite in recommending a Parks Highway visitor center (to be located near the “Chulitna Bluffs” in the Byers Lake area). But its plans about Tokositna-area facilities were less certain; it gave no location for its “Peters Hills nature center,” and 4 of the 12 committee members refused to support the

The state-operated campground at Byers Lake, in Denali State Park, is shown here between the Parks Highway and the lake. NPS Photo



idea. The report was forwarded on to state and federal officials.¹⁷⁴ Congress, in response, provided \$175,000 to the NPS to help implement the recently-completed plan, which was to “be used for National Park Service planners and engineers and for funding the cooperative agreements for local participation in this effort.” What emerged from that funding was the 2002 Community/Tourism plan for Talkeetna, and a series of meetings for the Trapper Creek and “Y” community council area which, in partnership with borough officials, led to comprehensive community plans for those areas.

In June 2002, Matanuska-Susitna Borough officials completed and distributed a borough-wide economic development plan. Among its other provisions, that document stated that the northern Susitna Valley was borough’s the key area for tourist-related economic growth. On the heels of that report, Borough officials requested a \$750,000 federal appropriation that would be used to prepare an implementation plan for South Denali facilities. Congress approved the request, and plans were made public in the spring of 2003. Governmental officials, at first, stated that their primary purpose was “to implement the 1997 South Side Plan,” the centerpiece of which was a visitor center in the Long Point area, plus upgrades to Petersville Road.¹⁷⁵ Officials, however, soon reconsidered that notion, and stated that the new Implementation Plan would “evaluate specific locations for proposed visitor and administrative facilities.”

In February 2004, the sponsoring agencies held five public meetings as part of their scoping process. The public was given 60 days to provide ideas on where development might be directed.¹⁷⁶ Most of those who commented during this period recommended a development site away from the Peters Hills, and in mid-April 2004—at the conclusion of the public comment period—government officials announced that the Peters Hills site was no longer being considered.; in its place were three other sites, all fewer than 5 miles away from the Parks Highway. By June 2004, the multi-agency team stated that it was considering six potential development sites: 1) Tokositna, 2) Peters Hills, 3) Kroto Creek, just south of the Peters Hills site, 4) the Chulitna Bluffs (Byers Lake) site, which had been noted in the 1999 consultation committee report, 5) Cari Creek (South Curry Ridge), to be accessed via a road junction at Mile 140 of the Parks Highway, seven miles south of Byers Lake, and 6) “Hill 1007,” located at the south end of Denali State Park, just west of the Chulitna River-Parks Highway corridor.¹⁷⁷ Almost a year later, in March 2005, the government planning team provided the public a preview of the draft implementation plan. By this time, they had officially discarded all action alternatives except for the South Curry Ridge and Peters Hills sites. Their recommended action, however, called for a visitor center midway up the west side of Curry Ridge in addition to Petersville Road facility upgrades, a bicycle-pedestrian path paralleling the road, campgrounds, hiking trails, and two Parks Highway trailhead parking



This view is seen from the most recent site selected for a south side visitor center. NPS Photo

areas. The draft plan, issued in September 2005, again noted that Curry Ridge was the agencies' preferred alternative. The proposed visitor center plan, however, differed from what had been proposed in 2004 inasmuch as the site would be accessed from Mile 134.6 of the Parks Highway, not from Mile 140 as had been proposed a year earlier. More specifically, planners recommended that the turnoff—which was sandwiched between Mary's McKinley View Lodge and the state's Denali Viewpoint South wayside—would mark the beginning of a 3.5 mile paved road to a 16,000-square-foot visitor center complex which would be located at the 1,700-foot level of Curry Ridge. Most of the access road, moreover, would be closed to tourist traffic; instead, a large parking lot and camping area would be located less than one-half mile east of the Parks Highway, and shuttle buses would provide visitor access from there to the visitor center. The draft plan noted that the governments' preferred option would cost \$26.9 million (up from an estimated \$19 million in April 2005); the plan also evaluated a second-tier, \$99.5 million alternative that called for a Peters Hills development.¹⁷⁸

Shortly after the draft plan was issued, the NPS announced a series of public meetings on the plan, which were held between October 19 and November 3 in five Railbelt locations. Turnout at these meetings was generally light; the best attended of them was a November 2 meeting at the Upper Susitna Valley Senior Center, which attracted "about two dozen" Talkeetna and Trap-

per Creek residents. As noted in one newspaper article, "the relatively low cost of the [eastern] state park site and not building along Petersville Road appear to be the plan's biggest draws." But some worried that "the center could spark development that would ruin the area's rural character." Citizens were given until November 15 to comment on the draft plan; during the public comment period, the sponsoring agencies received just 72 comments.¹⁷⁹

Because public opinion favored the Curry Ridge site far more than the Peters Hills site, the three sponsoring agencies continued to support a Curry Ridge visitor center when, in early May 2006, they jointly issued the *Final South Denali Implementation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*. The final plan closely resembled the draft plan in most if not all major aspects.¹⁸⁰ The issuance of the plan, which was announced in the *Federal Register* on June 13, started a 30-day no-action period. On July 31, Acting Regional Director Vic Knox signed a Record of Decision for the plan's environmental impact statement.¹⁸¹ Finally, almost 40 years after state and federal authorities had begun to entertain specific proposals for Denali south-side development, a workable plan for that development had finally been completed and signed. Actions that have followed since the plan's completion, moreover, suggest that Alaska's Congressional delegation appears to be amenable to near-term funding of the estimated \$28.1 million needed to implement the final plan.¹⁸²

Issues with Park Neighbors

The large number of tourists to the park, the growing number of area residents, and the area's role in the state's economic development has combined, in recent years, to make it all-important that NPS officials work cooperatively with its neighbors on various development plans. Since the mid-1990s, major issues on the park's periphery have included the Healy Clean Coal Project, entrance-area development issues, and relations between the park and nearby communities.

As noted in Chapter 9, the Healy Clean Coal Project had begun in 1989 when public and private authorities teamed up to apply for a Department of Energy grant for a 50 megawatt power plant under the federal Clean Coal Technology program. Later that year, DOE officials approved the grant; at that time, the costs for constructing the plant were an estimated \$161 million, and the plant was scheduled to be completed in 1995. But there were squabbles over project financing, and an environmental lawsuit intervened.

By 1995, plant construction costs had ballooned to \$267 million, making it more than twice as expensive as other coal plants. Natural gas producers—who produced a competing form of energy—ridiculed the project because there was no near-term demand for the electricity that the plant would generate.¹⁸¹ And even though the plant was purportedly using cutting edge technology, the coal industry by this time had already refined less expensive processes that were just as effective in reducing pollution.¹⁸²

In spite of those factors, power plant construction finally began in May 1995. By July 1996 the plant was one-quarter finished, and 350 people—95 percent of them Alaska residents—were working on the coal-fired generator that, according to one news account, “will feed electricity to a new gold mine [Fort Knox] and other Fairbanks-area power users.” Plans called for the plant's completion in August 1997, after which it would operate in a demonstration mode for a year; commercial operation was expected to begin in early 1999. In terms of both sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide emissions, it was hoped that the plant, according to one official, would “probably be four times cleaner than many plants operating in the Lower 48.”¹⁸³

Construction on the plant was completed in 1997, and according to one of the project partners, the new plant began operations in January 1998.¹⁸⁴ But in its first months of operation, Golden Valley Electric Association (GVEA) officials discovered that the experimental technology made the plant more costly to run than the utility's other

power generating facilities; in addition, they felt that the plant was unsafe and unreliable. Based on those conclusions, GVEA filed a lawsuit in the spring of 1998 in hopes of backing out of its part of the contract. The Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA), which helped provide financing for the project, then countersued to ensure GVEA's continued participation.

In mid-August 1999, more than a year after the plant opened, the GVEA commenced a crucial 90-day test of its power-generating capabilities; as called for in the contract, the utility could back out of the deal if the plant could not maintain 85 percent efficiency. The test, however, showed that its efficiency was well above that level; even so, GVEA stated that it didn't want either the plant or its electricity because cheaper electricity was available elsewhere.¹⁸⁷ The plant, in fact, shut down after the conclusion of its 90-day test period, and largely because of the ongoing litigation between GVEA and AIDEA, the plant has been mothballed ever since.

For the first year and a half after the plant shut down, GVEA and AIDEA remained at loggerheads. But AIDEA, which was paying \$6.5 million per year for an idle plant, recognized that it was in the authority's best interest to get the plant running again. In late 2000 the two parties settled their lawsuit; that settlement gave the utility the option to proceed with a full or partial retrofitting of the plant, but it also obligated GVEA to work with AIDEA to get the plant operating again.¹⁸⁸ In a joint attempt to get the plant back in operation, GVEA and AIDEA offered a proposal in September 2001 that centered on replacing the plant's experimental combustors with more economical standard burners. That proposal hinged on obtaining a \$125 million loan for that purpose, perhaps from the Rural Utilities Service or some other federal agency. And of concern to environmentalists, they also needed to convince state air regulators that replacing the combustors would not result in increased pollution levels.¹⁸⁹

The NPS, in the midst of this debate, had sent out mixed messages; in 2000, the agency had gone on record stating that any GVEA retrofit had to undergo a formal technology review as described in clean air laws, but in early 2002 the NPS and GVEA jointly agreed that the utility needed only to prepare an “engineering analysis” explaining why additional pollution control devices were not feasible. This apparent change in stance drew fire from environmental groups, although NPS officials, just as vehemently, argued that the agency's position had not changed; the agreed-upon levels of nitrogen



In 1993, the Department of the Interior negotiated a mitigation agreement with state, federal, and industry proponents of the new Healy power plant to insure protection of the park's Class I airshed. Photo © Kennan Ward, NPS Interp. Collection, #4932

oxide, in fact, were 7 percent lower than had been considered acceptable back in 1993. In order to obtain the \$125 million loan, the Alaska Congressional delegation tried to include it in a spring 2002 energy bill.¹⁰⁰ In mid-April, the Senate voted to include this provision, and later that month the energy bill passed the Senate. The bill then moved to a Senate-House conference committee. The bill remained active until the waning hours of the 107th Congress, but it never reached the president's desk.¹⁰¹ Given the failure of that bill and Golden Valley's continued lack of interest, AIDEA wrote off as a loss about half of its \$125 million investment in the clean coal project. AIDEA officials, however, showed their displeasure by filing suit against the utility; the main contention of the \$167 million suit was that GVEA had breached the terms of a 2000 settlement by denying AIDEA the opportunity to restart the power plant.¹⁰²

Since early 2005, several parties have acted to get the mothballed plant running again. On August 8, Congress passed the Energy Policy Act of 2005 that included \$80 million in loans for plant repairs. These funds were sufficient to get the plant running again. AIDEA officials, however, did not request the loans and showed little inter-

est in borrowing money for this purpose.¹⁰³ But in early October, a new utility—Homer Electric Association—showed interest in the plant by signing an agreement with AIDEA. The Homer utility, which was dependent on natural gas for its electricity source, was concerned about the rising price of natural gas; as part of its agreement, AIDEA and the utility would assess the plant (which by now had cost \$297 million) and determine what work was needed to get the plant operating again using state-of-the-art clean coal technology. The following year, the state legislature did what it could to help; as part of the 2007 capital budget, it authorized AIDEA to spend \$12.5 million from the Railbelt Energy Fund to help restart the Healy power plant. But Homer Electric officials recognized that \$12.5 million was insufficient to get the plant running again, and one Fairbanks-area legislator opposed the legislature's move, calling it “throwing good money after bad.”¹⁰⁴ Perhaps because of those criticisms, Governor Murkowski vetoed AIDEA's request. Homer Electric, however, continued in its quest to obtain the power from Healy's clean coal plant. In November 2006, the utility announced that it had worked out a “potential landmark agreement” with AIDEA to restart the mothballed plant, and in late February 2007 the



The Denali Princess Wilderness Lodge, located 1 mile north of the entrance to the park, opened in 1987 as Harper Lodge. The lodge has had several expansions since that time and is now operated during the summer by more than 500 seasonal and full-time staff. NPS Photo

two entities finalized that deal. AIDEA, according to the plan, would assume the plant's startup costs, but Homer Electric would operate the plant. The plan, however, was contingent on a resolution of AIDEA's lawsuit against Golden Valley. An AIDEA official, asked about a possible timetable for resolving the legal dispute, stated that he hoped to clear it up "in the near term," possibly within the next six months.¹⁹⁵

A second major issue with which park officials needed to grapple was how to manage growth on the park's eastern margins. As noted in Chapter 9, hotel development on the park's margins began in earnest in 1978-80 with the construction and expansion of the McKinley Chalets. This complex was owned by ARA Services, the park concessioner, and it included a gift shop, restaurant, and lounge. Continued tourist growth soon spawned additional area businesses, and by 1983 "the canyon" (as it was then known) had become home to "taco stands, horse rides, two campgrounds ... and a liquor store." A small (39-room) hostelry, called Denali Crow's Nest Log Cabins, opened in 1985, and the following year

witnessed an additional McKinley Chalets expansion. In 1987, major new growth arrived with the 154-room Harper Lodge, which was owned by a division of Princess Cruises and operated as part of the Princess Tours network.¹⁹⁶ By the summer of 1989 one news report noted that the mile-long strip of highway offered "about eight motels, a half-dozen river raft outfits, several gas stations, a pizzeria [sic] and more or less a brand-new community." In 1992, three new hostelries opened in the area, and during the early 1990s other new businesses included a gift shop and mini-golf course.¹⁹⁷ (See Map 2.) Growth in "the canyon" was matched by similar development to the north and south; during the 1980s and early 1990s eleven new tourism-related businesses sprang up along the two-mile Parks Highway segment surrounding the Healy turnoff, along with five additional businesses on the seven-mile stretch of road south of McKinley Village.¹⁹⁸

Since the mid-1990s, growth has continued along the entire 40 miles of the Parks Highway between Cantwell and Healy, the only exception

to that growth being the 6.8 miles of highway located inside the park. According to one compilation, more than 40 new businesses—21 of them hostelries—have opened up along the park's eastern margin during this period. Most of the new hostelries were fairly modest in scale.¹⁹⁹ Three, however, exceeded 100 rooms apiece, and two were located in Nenana Canyon, just north of the park entrance: the 112-room Denali Bluffs Hotel, which opened in 1996, and the 150-room Grande Denali Lodge, which opened in the spring of 2001.²⁰⁰ Both of these hotels were east of—and up a steep slope from—the Parks Highway corridor and offered commanding views of the park's eastern entrance area.²⁰¹ The

mid-1990s had witnessed strong growth in visitation to the park's backcountry, and particularly heady growth had taken place with flightseeing and air tour operations. But the geographical restrictions of the park's eastern entrance area limited the number of commercial group options to the tour bus trip down the park road or perhaps a flightseeing trip, and relatively few visitors have showed an interest in hikes to Mt. Healy or other park destinations. Other recreational alternatives have included gold panning, horseback riding, and the increasing number of programs offered through the Murie Science and Learning Center (see Chapter 11). Perhaps most popular has been rafting down the Nenana River. Raft trips on the



With increasing visitation and availability of lodging, a variety of activities have developed to interest area visitors, including raft trips on the Nenana River, flightseeing, hiking front country trails, classes at the Murie Science and Learning Center, and visits to the Denali Visitor Center. NPS Interp. Collection, #2768, Denali National Park and Preserve

Holland America Line, moreover, is in the midst of adding still more hotel rooms in the area; the 150-room Denali Canyon Lodge, located between the Denali Princess Wilderness Lodge and the McKinley Chalets Resort, broke ground in 2005 and opened to the public in the spring of 2006. Plans call for the eventual construction of more than 400 additional rooms on the property.²⁰² In addition, Cook Inlet Region, Inc., the Anchorage-based Native regional corporation, announced plans in 2005 to build a 250-room hotel on the bluff just south of the McKinley Village Resort and west of the Parks Highway. These plans have seen been shelved, at least for the time being.²⁰³

The ever-increasing crowds flocking into these hotels put increased pressure for new access into the park. As noted earlier in this chapter, the NPS in its front country plan tried its best, given the agency's legal and ecological constraints, to accommodate the need for visitor activities. The

Nenana have been offered since the early 1980s, and by the late 1990s the activity had become so popular that six companies were taking some 40,000 people each summer on either the 13-mile "scenic" or "wilderness" run starting at McKinley Village or the more adventurous "canyon" run beginning at Kingfisher Creek.²⁰⁴

Given such a concentration of economic activity in such a limited area, and the obvious contrast between these businesses and the relatively undeveloped land outside of that corridor, various critics have denounced the area as unsightly, and since the mid-1990s a few publications have used the pejorative term "Glitter Gulch" to describe the area.²⁰⁵ As one 2005 visitor caustically noted, the area offered

row after row of cheap motels, theme eateries and chain franchises, all bunched up against the canyon



"Glitter Gulch" received the first two stop lights in the area in 2003 as part of the Alaska Department of Transportation program to improve safety along this busy section of the George Parks Highway. NPS Photo

walls like commercial lions around a tourist watering hole. ... The highest building of all [the Grande Denali Hotel] is an architectural expletive, a motel carved into a cliff prone to landslides. ... This juxtaposition of Denali and commercial crapola mocks two notions at once: wilderness and sensible land use.²⁰⁶

Such development has invited comparison with other park entrance-gate communities such as West Yellowstone, Montana; Gatlinburg, Tennessee, near Great Smoky Mountains National Park; or Tusayan, Arizona, on the margins of Grand Canyon National Park. Reporters for Alaska newspapers have been no less critical, and typically use the "Glitter Gulch" moniker rather than "Nenana Canyon" as suggested by local business interests.²⁰⁷

National Park Service officials were well aware of the area's growing unsightliness but, because the area was on state and private land, they were in little or no position to directly influence land use changes. But they were able to participate, to some degree, in a planning process that provided various basic transportation improvements in the mile-long commercial strip. In the mid-1990s the Alaska Department of Transportation and

Public Facilities (ADOT) developed the Nenana Canyon Safety Improvements Project as a way to safely allow both local and bypass traffic; as noted in an October 1996 environmental document, the agency recommended a two-lane highway through the area plus the construction of adjacent frontage roads and bicycle paths. But local businesses, the NPS, and the general public all objected to ADOT's plans.

To work out a more acceptable alternative, the NPS and ADOT worked with various partners—Denali Borough, the Greater Healy/Denali Chamber of Commerce, and the Alaska Natural History Association—on a Designing for Community Workshop that was held at the Denali Princess Hotel in September 1998.²⁰⁸ At that workshop, local residents argued against the ADOT plan and instead recommended more emphasis on creating a worthy gateway community with more of an emphasis on non-motorized transportation. Those concerns, in turn, were transmitted to the powerful state TRAAK board,²⁰⁹ which successfully urged ADOT to discard its existing plans. In the wake of that cancellation, Denali Borough appointed an Ad Hoc Committee consisting of local business owners, NPS staff, and other local residents. That committee worked with borough and ADOT officials on a plan that was finalized in mid-November

2000. Key to the committee's recommendations was the retention of the existing, two-lane highway, the establishment of bicycle pathways rather than frontage roads, and the construction of several pedestrian underpasses under the Parks Highway. Provisions were also included for two pedestrian bridges (over Kingfisher Creek and the Nenana River), a raft put-in spot at the mouth of Kingfisher Creek, a pedestrian walkway on NPS land south of the Nenana River bridge, and the installation of various interpretive signs.²¹⁰

Matters got more complicated, however, when ADOT officials announced plans for a Parks Highway Corridor Study. This proposed, multi-year study would encompass the entire 323-mile length of the highway, and officials announced that no project funds could be spent along the highway until the study was completed.²¹¹ Protests from Denali-area residents, however, were so strong that ADOT quickly backed down from its announced plans—at least in the Nenana Canyon. Instead, the agency decided to construct an interim project that included most of what the Ad Hoc Committee had recommended. The only major deviation from the earlier plan was ADOT's decision to drop the pedestrian underpasses in favor of traffic signals; these two stoplights would remain only until the completion of ADOT's Parks Highway corridor study. The larger study, however, got bogged down and was never completed. As a result, the "temporary" stoplights that were installed in 2003 have

remained to the present day. Construction of the remaining project elements also began in the spring of 2003. Most project work was completed that season, but the pedestrian bridges were finished the following summer.²¹²

Given the relatively large size of the tourist infrastructure just outside the park and the relatively high seasonal population, local residents began to formulate ways to attract people to the park's margins. Many permanent residents liked the idea of attracting visitors to the area for other than the usual park visitation, and local entrepreneurs were always on the lookout for ways to attract more people to the area. Perhaps the first such widely-publicized effort was the "Moose Scat Scoot," which was first organized in 1994. This event was a series of races; perhaps the most publicized was a 13-mile (or half-marathon) run, but as noted in one press release, shorter distances were also offered that could "be run, walked, bicycled, or done on a scooter." The event has been sponsored by Denali Park Resorts and organized by the company's employees; proceeds have benefited the Alaskan AIDS Assistance Association.²¹³

In early 2001 there began a new, community-based event: the Denali Winter Festival. First held over the weekend of February 23-25, "Winterfest" was an eclectic mix of outdoor sports activities, outdoor education, fiddle music, lectures, and safety demonstrations. Events were held both at Healy's Tri-Valley Community Center and at the



Winterfest activities revolve around demonstrations and participation in winter-related events, including a chili cookoff, cross country skiing lessons and avalanche awareness education. NPS Photo



In 2004, Denali's management team, left to right, included Mike Cobbold, Safety Officer, Kris Fister, Public Affairs, Dutch Scholten, Chief of Maintenance, Philip Hooge, Assistant Superintendent for Resources, Science and Learning, Paul Anderson, Superintendent, Blanca Stransky, Chief of Interpretation, Mike Tranel, Chief of Planning, Julie Wilkerson, Chief of Administration, Elwood Lynn, Assistant Superintendent for Operations, Donna Sisson, Chief of Concessions, Hollis Twitchell, Chief of Subsistence and Cultural Resources, and Pete Armington, Chief Ranger. NPS Photo

park's visitor center; the park and its employees played an active role in the program as organizers, presenters, and participants.²⁴⁴ In the years since 2001, Winterfest has remained an active, popular event; though specific events have changed from year to year, events have remained focused on the area between McKinley Village and Healy, though some attendees hail from Anchorage, Fairbanks, and elsewhere. Winterfests are held between late February and mid-March; most recently, the gathering has proven so popular that events are held over a four-day period, beginning on Thursday. The NPS, in most cases, has served as Winterfest's publicist, and park employees have helped organize the weekend's various events.²⁴⁵

Operational Realities: Staff, Budgets, and Seasonal Road Access Issues

During the late 1980s and early 1990s (see Chapter 9), Russell Berry served as the Denali Superintendent. In late 1994, Berry left Alaska for the superintendency of Cape Hatteras National Seashore in North Carolina, and Steve Martin—then the superintendent for Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve—was asked to take over the reins at Denali in an acting capacity. Martin became the superintendent proper the following

March, and he remained on the job until early January 2002, when he moved to Wyoming and became the Grand Teton National Park superintendent. Throughout this period, Denali had also had a deputy superintendent: Linda Toms (later Linda Buswell) beginning in late 1989, and Diane Chung commencing in July 2000, about a year after Buswell's retirement. After Martin's transfer, Chung briefly assumed the helm until the arrival of the new superintendent, Paul Anderson, who was selected at the end of January 2002. Anderson, a 23-year NPS veteran who had served for the past nine years as Alaska's Deputy Regional Director, served as Denali's superintendent until late 2007, when he was succeeded by Elwood Lynn in an acting capacity.²⁴⁶ Sharing park management responsibilities in recent years have been two new assistant superintendents: Philip Hooge, who transferred to the park from the U.S. Geological Survey's Glacier Bay Field Station in May 2003, and longtime maintenance chief Elwood Lynn, who held his new position from April 2004 until he became the park's acting superintendent.²⁴⁷

Since the mid-1990s, park visitation has increased about 25 percent (from approximately 341,400

Each year the seasonal NPS staff is welcomed with an orientation program and lunch, shown here being held in the Headquarters Historic District in 2006. That year the park officially employed 110 permanents and 208 seasonals. NPS Photo



in 1996 to 425,846 in 2006). The park's annual base budget, during the past decade, has also changed in fairly modest increments in recent years; the inflation-adjusted base budget rose approximately 25 percent between 1996 and 2005.²¹⁸ Given these budgetary changes, park officials have been able to hire additional staff. In 1996, the park had a workforce of 77 permanent positions, plus another 113 seasonal positions; by 2004, the number of permanent employees on the park payroll had risen to 105, plus another 194 seasonals; and by 2006 the staff total stood at 110 permanents and 208 seasonals.²¹⁹ Contributing greatly to the park's overall vitality have been the efforts of a dedicated corps of volunteers. In 1996, 68 volunteers contributed 19,717 hours to the park, but by 2004 the number of so-called VIPs (Volunteers in Parks) had climbed to 306 and they had donated 27,136 hours of effort to all phases of park operations, primarily in kennel care, vegetation reseeding, maintenance work and mountaineering.²²⁰

As noted above, as well as in Chapter 9, the problem of managing the park road during the summer season has been a continuing challenge in recent years. Vexing problems have also been a longtime pattern as they pertain to road management during the so-called shoulder seasons. Each spring, NPS officials are asked—within a narrow, challenging time frame—to clear the park road of snow and prepare it for the upcoming summer season, and each fall, the agency needs to provide access to private vehicular traf-

fic while simultaneously protecting park resources. To improve spring road management, agency officials experimented with new road-clearing methods, and to better manage fall vehicular traffic, park staff tried out new management methods. These experiments have continued to the present day.

As noted in Chapter 9, the NPS during the 1983-1985 period tried to improve the spring road-opening process in two ways: by purchasing a "ripper" attachment for the park's D-7 Caterpillar, and by constructing an insulated underdrain system in the Mile 4 area. Both methods, however, proved imperfect: the former because it damaged the paved road surface, and the latter because it was unable to mitigate the Mile 4 aufeis problem. Between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s, road crews prevented ice buildup by periodically going over problem areas with a road grader that had a ripper attached. But beginning in 1992, that option was no longer available, and for the next decade midwinter ice buildup re-emerged as a major if intermittent problem, one that had to be taken care of during spring road opening. Significant ice problems during the winters of 1996, 1999, and 2001, however, forced park staff to re-examine the situation. An Outside study of the problem, drafted in 2002 and published in 2003, recommended the importation of snowmaking equipment, to be used as necessary during October through December.²²¹ The park's maintenance division, however, rejected that idea on both economic and envi-

ronmental grounds; instead, it asked for authority to manage midwinter ice buildup as it had prior to 1992. Park officials granted that request, and since the winter of 2002-03, park road crews have again worked to prevent midwinter ice buildup. Employing this technique has increased operator safety, and has lessened the amount of time and effort needed to remove aufeis during spring road opening.²²²

Major changes have also come to those who visit the park during the fall shoulder season. As mentioned in Chapter 9, the rising popularity of fall visitation—brought on by the beautiful fall colors, the increased level of animal activity, and the lack of summertime traffic restrictions—forced the NPS in 1990 to adopt a lottery system. Each year, for a four-day period in September, the entire park road was open to motor vehicles; those able to drive the road, however, had to be one of the lucky 1,200 people—300 each day for each of the four days—selected in the lottery. (Before that four-day period, motorists could not drive farther west than the Savage River check station; after those four days, motorists were free to drive as far west as Teklanika until snow closed the park road.) By the mid-1990s, the lottery was a well-established, popular way to provide public access to portions of the park that would otherwise be closed to the motoring public.

Beginning in 1995, NPS officials—recognizing the increasing popularity of the fall road lottery and evidently feeling that the four-day event was hav-

ing no lasting harm on the park's wildlife—decided to allow an additional 100 people each day to drive the park road. This change increased, if slightly, the possibility of success for each lottery application. Those improved chances, however, soon faded away as the lottery became ever more popular; while perhaps 4,000 people sent in applications in 1995, that number climbed to more than 10,000 in 2000.²²³

After 2000, the number of fall lottery applications continued to rise, and by 2003 the agency received about 18,000 entries. This volume meant that the chance of an applicant gaining one of the coveted slots was less than 1 in 11. Managing that volume, moreover, was turning into a bureaucratic headache; while the costs of operating the lottery system had once been fairly nominal, dealing with 18,000 applications—plus on-the-ground costs for rangers and other park personnel during the four-day lottery period—now cost an estimated \$80,000 to \$90,000. Given those costs, and the ever-tightening budget with which the park had to operate, officials reluctantly decided that new funds were necessary. In May 2004, therefore, the agency announced that beginning that summer, all applicants for that fall's road lottery would need to pay a nonrefundable \$10 fee, and those who were selected for the lottery would be obligated to pay an additional \$35, of which \$10 would pay for the park's entrance fee. Members of the public, not surprisingly, were disappointed at the agency's move. And as a result, only about 5,900 people



The annual fall road opening to lottery winners provides an opportunity for motorists to drive the park road in their personal vehicles, stopping whenever they wish to view something interesting. The lottery's success depends on favorable weather conditions. NPS Photo

sent in applications in July 2004—about one-third the number that had applied the previous year.²²⁴ In the short time since the new, fee-based system was instituted, the number of applicants has risen; the number of 2006 applications, for example, was 6,885.²²⁵

Notes - Chapter 10

¹ Denali Task Force, *Denali Task Force Report; Findings and Recommendations for the National Park Service Advisory Board*, October 25, 1994, 6-7.

² NPS, *Draft Development Concept Plan Environmental Impact Statement, Entrance Area and Road Corridor, DENA* (Denver, the author, June 1996), 25-28.

³ *Ibid.*, iii-iv, 29-98; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 18, 1996, A-1.

⁴ NPS, *Final Development Concept Plan [and] Abbreviated Final Environmental Impact Statement, Entrance Area and Road Corridor, DENA* (Denver, the author, December 1996), i; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 3, 1996, D-4.

⁵ NPS, *Final Development Concept Plan*, December 1996, 23-56.

⁶ NPS, *Entrance Area and Road Corridor Development Concept Plan, DENA* (Denver, the author), May 1997; Katherine M. Heinrich, "NPS Finalizes Denali Plans," *National Parks* 71 (May/June 1997), 21-22.

⁷ SAR, 1996, 2; SAR 1997, 1; SAR, 1998, 1.

⁸ "Denali Hotel Shut," *Travel Agent* 302 (January 22, 2001), 2; "Denali Park to Close," *Travel Agent* 303 (March 12, 2001), 86; Jerry Brown, "Hotel is History," *TravelAge West* 36 (April 16, 2001), 54.

⁹ The 22-year-old, 5,000-square-foot auditorium was placed on a truck and moved to the junction of the Parks Highway and Stampede Road, two miles north of Healy. It now serves as the main church building for the In His Shadow Ministries. *Anchorage Daily News*, August 2, 2002, B-3.

¹⁰ SAR, 2002, 15; SAR, 2003, 7. Joe Durrenberger email, August 2, 2006; Steve Carwile interview, July 26, 2006; Randy Thompson email, November 20, 2006. Three railroad cars were moved to a site near the Parks Highway-Otto Lake Road intersection, near Healy's golf course. Two others were relocated to a railroad museum in Nenana, and two more became part of a bed-and-breakfast in Fairbanks.

¹¹ NPS, "Environmental Assessment for Location of Visitor Facilities in the Entrance Area of Denali National Park" (DENA press release), December 6, 2001; Scott N. Reiland, testimony in House Hearing on "Federal Government Competition with Small Business," Serial No. 107-19, July 18, 2001, 144-48.

¹² SAR, 2002, 7, 15; Public Law 106-113, Appendix C (NPS), signed November 29, 1999, in *U.S. Statutes at Large* 113 (1999), p. 1501A-143.

¹³ SAR, 2002, 7, 15.

¹⁴ NPS, "Finding of No Significant Impact, Construction of New Visitor Facilities in the Entrance Area, DENA," January 31, 2002, Steve Carwile files.

¹⁵ The mercantile building, built in 1958 (see Chapter 7), had served for many years as a combined store and service station, but by the early 1990s at least one service station was in business in "Glitter Gulch" less than two miles away. The park concessioner, as a result, converted the entire building into a store. Steve Carwile interview, June 26, 2006.

¹⁶ SAR, 2002, 15. The park post office had been located in the Denali Park railroad station prior to its move to the double-wide trailer. Steve Carwile interview, July 27, 2006.

¹⁷ SAR, 2002, 15; SAR, 2003, 7, 19; Paul Anderson email, January 23, 2007.

¹⁸ SAR, 2002, 15; NPS, "National Park Service to Dedicate New Murie Science and Learning Center," *AK2Day* (AKRO electronic newsletter), August 12, 2004; Paul Anderson email, January 23, 2007.

¹⁹ NPS, "New Facilities and Visitor Services in Denali Opening in May," *AK2Day*, May 5, 2005; "Focus on the Parks," *Arrowhead* (NPS newsletter), Vol. 12 (Spring 2005), 2; Steve Carwile interview, July 26, 2006; "Park to Celebrate Completion of New Visitor Facilities with Special Activities" (DENA Press Release), August 9, 2005. Earlier plans for an art gallery at the new visitor center complex have not yet been fulfilled.

²⁰ Drawing DENA-14001-2, TIC Aperture Card Collection; SAR, 1995, 8, 11.

²¹ NPS, "Eielson EA Out for Comment," *AK2Day*, April 11, 2004; NPS, "Comment Period Extended for Environmental Assessment for the Construction of a New Eielson Visitor Center and a Permanent Toklat Rest Stop," *AK2Day*, April 26, 2004.

²² *Anchorage Daily News*, September 22, 2004, B-1; NPS, "New Facilities and Visitor Services in Denali Opening in May," *AK2Day*, May 5, 2005; Mary Tidlow email, July 26, 2006.

²³ *AK2Day*, issues of April 11 and April 26, 2004 (see above); Steve Carwile interview, July 27, 2006; Mike Tranel and Mary Tidlow emails, August 24, 2007. At the Toklat site, the DCP envisioned a permanent structure with a partially-covered deck, but given the imminent demolition of the Eielson structures, the agency opted for the immediacy of a tent structure. "SSTs", an acronym for "sweet smelling toilets," were a significant improvement over chemical toilets. They were first used in Alaska at the Veterans' War Memorial (at Mile 147.5 of the Parks Highway) and have since been installed at several Denali locations.

²⁴ Steve Carwile interview, May 3, 2007.

²⁵ Mike Tranel interview, October 25, 2006; *Alaska House Bill History, 1997-1998*, for HJR 68 (p. 281). HJR 68, on June 9, 1998, became Legislative Resolve No. 85 for the Twentieth Alaska Legislature.

⁶⁶ H.R. 830 (February 5, 2007), and S. 1808 (July 17, 2007), in 110th Congress; see <http://thomas.loc.gov>; Steve Carwile interview, November 16, 2007.

⁶⁷ Congress passed the NPS Concessions Management Improvement Act of 1998, which was Title IV of the National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998 (S. 1693). President Clinton signed the bill into law (Public Law 105-391) on November 13, 1998.

⁶⁸ Mary Wysong review comments, March 13, 2007; Kevin Apgar comments, April 12, 2007; Richard G. Ring (Associate Director, Park Operations and Education) to RD/AR, June 28, 2001; NPS, *Amendment Number Six, Concession Contract Number CC-9100-1-002 (DENA001-81), ARAMARK Sports and Entertainment Services, Inc., DENA*, October 1, 2001; both in AKRO Concessions Division files. Also *Federal Register* 66 (October 1, 2001), 49975.

⁶⁹ David A. Watts to Stephen P. Martin, October 4, 1999, and Director, NPS to Michael C. Kelly, March 17, 2000, both from DENA Concessions Division files; Wysong review comments, March 13, 2007.

⁷⁰ ANILCA (P.L. 96-487), Sec. 1307(b); *United States Statutes at Large* 94 (December 2, 1980), 2480.

⁷¹ Mary Wysong and Kevin Apgar (DENA) chapter review notes, March 13, 2007 and April 12, 2007, respectively.

⁷² Marcia Blaszak (Acting RD/AR) to Director, NPS, July 11, 2002, in AKRO Concessions files; NPS, "Denali National Park Announces Selection of Concessioner Proposal for Transportation and Other Services" (DENA Press Release), July 30, 2002; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 1, 2002, B-1. The announcement stated that the contract—to an entity officially known as the Doyon/Aramark Denali National Park Concession Joint Venture—would begin in October 2002, but the interested parties needed time to review details of the contract and Congress had a designated 60-day notification period. The final contract was awarded on May 12, 2003, with a contract termination date of December 31, 2012. Robert L. Arnberger (RD/AR) to Orié Williams, May 12, 2003, in AKRO Concessions files.

⁷³ In 1996, the first Alaska Native corporation had obtained an NPS concessions contract when Goldbelt Inc. (the Juneau-based village corporation) had purchased the Glacier Bay concessions contract. Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI) also expressed an interest in the contract but decided to not submit a bid. Kevin Apgar interview, November 22, 2006.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*; NPS, *Prospectus, A Concession Business Opportunity for Transportation and Other Services, DENA (Solicitation DENA001-02)* (Anchorage, the author, February 15, 2002), 10-11, in AKRO Concessions files; Kevin Apgar, review comments, April 12, 2007.

⁷⁵ NPS, *Prospectus*, 15.

⁷⁶ NPS, *Monthly Public Use Reports (Form 10-157)*, various years, see the agency's Public Use Statistics Office website (<http://www2.nature.nps.gov>). The total passenger traffic for 2005 (about 220,500) was significantly higher than the historical norm.

⁷⁷ See, for example, Alaska Department of Commerce and Economic Development, *Alaska Economic Performance Report*, issues of 2002 (pp. 19-20) and 2005 (pp. 63-64).

⁷⁸ NPS, *Prospectus*, 15; Pricewaterhouse Coopers, LLP, *National Park Service, Financial Feasibility Analysis DENA* (February 14, 2002), 6, in AKRO Concessions Division files.

⁷⁹ *Anchorage Daily News*, January 12, 1995, B-1 and May 14, 1995, M-1; Stephen Monteiro, "Back on the Bus," *Backpacker* 23 (April 1995), 18.

⁸⁰ *Anchorage Daily News*, November 27, 1996, A-1 and January 2, 1997, B-2; April 20, 2004, B-1; NPS, "New and Increased Fees to Take Effect at Denali National Park" (DENA Press Release), April 19, 2004; *AK2Day* (AKRO electronic newsletter), September 16, 2005; Kris Fister email, August 6, 2006. The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act was Title VIII of the Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 108-447), which passed Congress on November 20, 2004 and was signed by President George W. Bush on December 8.

⁸¹ "Shuttle Bus Fees" section of park website (<http://www.nps.gov/dena/home/visitorinfo/bus/fees.html>). As noted on an website calculating inflation over the years (<http://eh.net/hmit/ppowerusd>), inflation rose 28.2% from 1995 to 2006; thus both the Wonder Lake and Fish Creek/Eielson trips cost less in 2006 (in terms of purchasing power) than in 1995.

⁸² *Anchorage Daily News*, July 10, 1989, B-1 and July 4, 1998, C-3.

⁸³ *Anchorage Daily News*, July 15, 1999, A-1; July 16, 1999, B-3; July 17, 1999, A-1; July 22, 1999, B-1; the Association's website (www.dnppro.com); Mary Wysong interview, November 22, 2006.

⁸⁴ The McNamara-O'Hara Service Contract Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-246) became law when President Johnson signed H.R. 10238 on October 22, 1965; it was the result of the efforts of Sen. Patrick V. McNamara and Rep. James G. O'Hara (both D-Mich). The law (U.S. Code 41, pp. 351-57) has since been amended.

⁸⁵ Kevin Apgar interview, March 26, 2007.

⁸⁶ *Anchorage Daily News*, June 4, 1995, B-1.

⁸⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, August 11, 1995, B-1; *Congressional Record* 141 (August 9, 1995), 22853-54.

⁸⁸ H.R. 3019, which included the budget of several federal departments, was signed by President Clinton on April 26, 1996 after which it became Public Law 104-134.

- ⁴⁰ SAR, 1996, 3-4; Butch Street (DSC) to author, email, April 12, 2006; Street to author, telephone call, April 13, 2006.
- ⁴¹ SAR, 1996, 2-3; *Anchorage Daily News*, January 18, 1997, B-3; January 21, 1997, A-1; NPS, *North Access Route Feasibility Study*, DENA (Denver, Denver Service Center, April 1997), 7-9; M. Katherine Heinrich, "NPS Finalizes Denali Plans," *National Parks* 71 (May/June 1997), 21-22. Kantishna Holdings, Inc. felt that a railroad could be built for \$136.1 million; the Alaska Railroad estimated a \$227.5 million price tag, and the BRW consulting company, given the results of its 1994 study, provided a construction estimate of \$213.6 million.
- ⁴² *Anchorage Daily News*, October 9, 1996, B-2.
- ⁴³ *Alaska House Bill History, 1997-1998*, for HJR 28 (p. 262); *Alaska Senate Bill History, 1997-1998*, for SJR 25 (p. 212). SJR 25 became Legislative Resolve No. 26 for the Twentieth Alaska Legislature.
- ⁴⁴ *Anchorage Daily News*, October 30, 1997, A-1, A-4; "U.S.-Alaska Study on Cost of Denali Road: A Million a Mile," *Travel Weekly* 57 (January 15, 1998), 80.
- ⁴⁵ *Anchorage Daily News*, May 23, 1998, A-1; 105th Congress, 1st Session, H.R. 2400; Public Law 105-178 (TEA-21), Section 1602, Item 1494.
- ⁴⁶ Denali Borough Assembly, *Minutes of Regular Meeting*, June 11, 2000, p. 4.
- ⁴⁷ *Alaska House Bill History, 1997-1998*, for HB 386 (pp. 191-92); *Anchorage Daily News*, May 1, 2001, A-1; NPS, "Northern Access to DENA" briefing statement, March 30, 2001, in DENA Public Affairs Office files.
- ⁴⁸ This work took place prior to the state legislature's action because, according to Denali Borough Assembly chair Scott Stowell, Senator Murkowski was impatient that work had not yet begun. Murkowski also assured borough officials that additional funds could be procured if necessary. Mike Tranel interview, October 13, 2006; Steve Carwile to Steve Martin, et al., email, July 21, 2000.
- ⁴⁹ *Alaska Senate Bill History, 2001-2002*, for SB 3 (p. 2) and SB 29 (pp. 18-20).
- ⁵⁰ *Alaska House Bill History, 2001-2002*, for HB 244 (pp. 181-82); *Alaska House Journal* 22:1 (2001), p. 959; *Anchorage Daily News*, May 1, 2001, A-1.
- ⁵¹ *Alaska House Bill History, 2001-2002*, for HB 244 (pp. 182-83); *Alaska House Journal* 22:1 (2001), pp. 1908-10, 1988-89; *Anchorage Daily News*, May 1, 2001, A-1; May 24, 2001, B-6; July 6, 2001, B-1; July 9, 2001, B-4; January 15, 2002, B-4.
- ⁵² In the early fall of 2000, the Borough Assembly had passed a resolution which had paved the way toward the state's action. "North Denali Access Route Planning/Reconnaissance" page on the Denali Borough website (www.denaliborough.govoffice.com); *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, January 9, 2003, B-1, B-2; NPS, "Northern Access Issue into DENA" (briefing statement), November 2000, in DENA Public Affairs Office files.
- ⁵³ Denali Borough, *North Denali Access Route Planning/Reconnaissance Study, Phase I Report*, April 1, 2003; *AK2Day* (NPS newsletter), January 4, 2005; *Anchorage Daily News*, January 16, 2005, B-3.
- ⁵⁴ *Anchorage Daily News*, February 28, 2006, B-4; Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, *Final North Denali Access Route Reconnaissance Study, Findings and Recommendations Report*, August 2006.
- ⁵⁵ *Anchorage Daily News*, November 22, 2005, B-1, B-3; December 23, 2005, B-4; February 28, 2006, B-4; Alaska Legislature, "Project Detail by Agency – FY 2006 Capital Budget" (chart), p. 132, via <http://www.gov.state.ak.us/omb/Archive/Index.htm>.
- ⁵⁶ *Anchorage Daily News*, February 28, 2006, B-4; Alaska Legislature, "Project Detail by Agency – FY 2007 Capital Budget" (chart), p. 117, via <http://www.gov.state.ak.us/omb/Archive/Index.htm>.
- ⁵⁷ Steve Carwile to author, email, September 21, 2006.
- ⁵⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, January 20, 2007, B-1.
- ⁵⁹ 106th Congress, 2nd Session, *Senate Report 106-312* for H.R. 4578 (June 22, 2000), p. 37.
- ⁶⁰ *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, January 9, 2003, B-1, B-2; *AK2Day*, May 28, 2003; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 8, 2003, B-5; Denali Borough, *North Denali Access Route, Phase I Report*, April 1, 2003; NPS and Alaska DNR, *Draft North Access Visitor Facilities Study*, April 2004; NPS and Alaska DNR, *North Access Visitor Facilities Study*, August 2004.
- ⁶¹ *Anchorage Daily News*, May 17, 2001, B-6; November 22, 2005, B-1, B-3; "America's 15 Most Endangered Wildlands," *Wilderness Society's Quarterly Newsletter* 2 (Summer 2000), 3; Kate Himot, "Ten Most Endangered," *National Parks* 75 (May-June 2001), 24.
- ⁶² *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, January 9, 2003, B-1, B-2.
- ⁶³ Norris, *Alaska Subsistence*, 124, 127.
- ⁶⁴ *Anchorage Daily News*, November 11, 1998, B-1; Steve Carwile interview, October 19, 2006.
- ⁶⁵ *Anchorage Daily News*, November 14, 1996, B-1, B-3; *Federal Register* 64 (November 12, 1999), 61567.
- ⁶⁶ *Anchorage Daily News*, November 11, 1998, B-1.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*; *Anchorage Daily News*, November 30, 1998, B-4.
- ⁶⁸ Stephen P. Martin to Sandy Kogl, May 16, 1996, in Carwile files; Steve Carwile interview, October 19, 2006; Chip Dennerlein, "Regional Report, Alaska," *National Parks* 72 (November/December 1998), 18.
- ⁶⁹ *Anchorage Daily News*, November 11, 1998, B-1; Joe Gauna, "Denali Wilderness Zone Should Stay Open to Motorized Recreation Says Alaska Senator," *Alaska Snow Rider* 9 (October 1998), 1. In that article, Gauna

quoted Sen. Murkowski as saying that “he will be with us in our fight to keep the Denali National Park wilderness zone open to snowmobiling, as ANILCA says it SHALL be.”

⁷⁹ Federal regulations (specifically portions of the *Code of Federal Regulations*, volume 43, section 36.11) stated that a park superintendent could make a temporary closure (for one year or less), while long-term closures required the issuance of a rule in the *Federal Register*.

⁸⁰ “Snowmachine Proposal Extends Riding Prohibition in Wilderness Core of Denali National Park” (DENA Press Release), November 10, 1998, in DENA Box 1, HFC; *Anchorage Daily News*, November 11, 1998, B-1.

⁸¹ *Anchorage Daily News*, November 11, 1998, B-1; November 25, 1998, D-2; November 26, 1998, D-1; November 30, 1998, B-4; December 2, 1998, B-7; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, November 22, 1998, A-4; November 23, 1998, A-1, A-7.

⁸² *Anchorage Daily News*, December 29, 1998, B-1; December 30, 1998, B-6; Steve Carwile interview, October 19, 2006.

⁸³ *Alaska House Bill History, 1999-2000*, 298; *Senate Bill History, 1999-2000*, 214-15. Senate Joint Resolution 5, after passage, became Legislative Resolve 3 for the 21st Alaska Legislature.

⁸⁴ *Anchorage Daily News*, December 29, 1998, B-1; December 30, 1998, B-6.

⁸⁵ *Anchorage Daily News*, February 5, 1999, A-1; “Snowmachines Banned in Denali Park Areas,” *Alaska Magazine* 65 (May-June 1999), 17; Dean Littlepage, “Good Fight: A Snow Job in Denali Wilderness, Advocates and Snowmobilers Battle Over Trackless Alaska Lands,” *Backpacker* 28 (February 2000), p. 15.

⁸⁶ *Anchorage Daily News*, February 24, 1999, B-1; April 9, 1999, B-1; *Wall Street Journal*, May 13, 1999, B-1.

⁸⁷ Chip Dennerlein, “Alaska Regional Report,” *National Parks* 73 (July-August 1999), 18.

⁸⁸ NPS, *Denali National Park and Preserve, Briefing Presentation: Proposed Special Regulation Package*, July 1999, DENA Public Information Office files; “Core of Denali Would Remain Closed to Snowmobiles Under NPS Regulation Proposal” (DENA Press Release), November 9, 1999, in DENA Box 1, HFC; *Anchorage Daily News*, November 10, 1999, B-1; *Federal Register* 64 (November 12, 1999), 61563-72. Martin’s decision was illegal because it violated both ANILCA (based on the lack of a “traditional activities” definition) and the National Environmental Policy Act.

⁸⁹ NPS, *Environmental Assessment for Permanent Closure of the Former Mount McKinley National Park to Snowmobile Use*, November 9, 1999, 2; *Anchorage Daily News*, November 23, 1999, B-1.

⁹⁰ *Federal Supplement, 2nd Series*, Vol. 79 (November 8, 1999), pp. 1119, 1146.

⁹¹ *Anchorage Daily News*, November 20, 1999, A-1; Case No. A99-59 CV (JWS), in 1999 *U.S. Dist. Lexis*, 21148.

⁹² *Anchorage Daily News*, November 23, 1999, B-1.

⁹³ *Anchorage Daily News*, December 5, 1999, B-1; December 10, 1999, A-1.

⁹⁴ Margaret Myre’s March 2000 statement that the park remained closed to snowmachines because of “a series of 12-month prohibitions” is incorrect. See Myre, “Limits on Snowmachines Favored,” *Travel Weekly* 59 (March 30, 2000), 22.

⁹⁵ *Anchorage Daily News*, December 18, 1999, C-9. Martin’s announcement, at the beginning of the 1999-2000 winter recreation season, was followed by a similar announcement the following spring. Ever since that time, park press releases have provided similar guidance to snowmachine riders at the beginning and end of each season. Kris Fister to author, email, October 11, 2006.

⁹⁶ *Anchorage Daily News*, December 18, 1999, C-9.

⁹⁷ Steve Carwile interview, October 19, 2006.

⁹⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, January 12, 2000, B-3; *Federal Register* 65 (January 19, 2000), 2920.

⁹⁹ Myre, “Limits on Snowmachines Favored,” 22; William A. Updike, “Letters Call for Snowmachine Ban in Denali,” *National Parks* 74 (May-June 2000), 52; “Snowmobile Enthusiasts Seek to Open Denali’s Wild Heart to Harmful Recreation” (NPCA Press Release), April 5, 2000, in DENA Box 1, HFC; Mike Tranel, review comment, June 22, 2007. The State of Alaska, however, apparently did not support the proposed rule. As noted in the *Anchorage Daily News* for March 12, 2000, p. A-12, Sean Parnell, who was a State Senate Finance Committee co-chair, stated that “statehood defense is an extraordinarily important issue right now” and further noted that snowmachine access to Denali National Park was one of the major elements in that fight.

¹⁰⁰ NPS, *Statement of Finding: Permanent Closure of the Former Mt. McKinley National Park Area of Denali National Park and Preserve to the Use of Snowmachines*, June, 2000, 3, 23. This document, along with an accompanying final rule (*Federal Register* 65 [June 19, 2000], 37863-79), provided a definition of “traditional activity.” That definition differed “in two main ways” (p. 37866) from what the NPS had propounded in November 1999.

¹⁰¹ Elizabeth G. Daerr, “Park Service to Issue Rules on Off-Road Vehicles,” *National Parks* 74 (May-June 2000), 12; Elizabeth G. Daerr, “Regional Report on NPCA’s Work in the Parks,” *National Parks* 74 (July-August 2000), 20, *Federal Register* 65 (June 19, 2000), 37863-79.

¹⁰² *Anchorage Daily News*, April 27, 2006, B-1; Peter Arrington (Chief Ranger, DENA), email to author, October 11, 2006.

- ¹⁰¹ Elizabeth G. Daerr, "Regional Report," *National Parks* 75 (January-February 2001), 26. The "snowmachine industry," in this context, consisted of the Alaska State Snowmobile Association and the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association.
- ¹⁰² *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, April 11, 2001, 1-A. Horn, at the time, was described as "a Washington lawyer with close ties to the Interior Department." See Daerr, "Regional Report," 26.
- ¹⁰³ *Anchorage Daily News*, April 22, 2001, B-1.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Chicago Tribune*, June 1, 2001, 8; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 5, 2001, B-4.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Anchorage Daily News*, May 15, 2002, B-1; May 18, 2002, A-3; 107th Congress, 2nd Session, H.R. 4677 (May 7, 2002). The *Daily News* originally reported that Young's bill would "open up most of the area inside the original park boundaries," but three days later, Young's spokesperson noted that the bill would "open only a small area of the old park to snowmobiles."
- ¹⁰⁶ *Anchorage Daily News*, June 19, 2002, B-6; 107th Congress, 2nd Session, S. 2589 (June 5, 2002); "Regional Report," *National Parks* 76 (September-October 2002), 11.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Washington Post*, January 16, 2003, A-1.
- ¹⁰⁸ Littlepage, "Good Fight," 15; Mike Tranel interview, October 19, 2006.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Anchorage Daily News*, October 15, 1999, C-1; NPS, *DENA Draft Backcountry Management Plan, General Management Plan Amendment, Environmental Impact Statement* (Denali Park, Alaska, the author, February 2003), 57, 94, 109. The primary demarcations in the draft plan, as noted in the section below, were three management zones known as "backcountry areas," "primitive areas," and "natural areas," but designations of snowmachine access did not correspond to these zone designations.
- ¹¹⁰ NPS, *DENA Revised Draft Backcountry Management Plan General Management Plan Amendment, Environmental Impact Statement* (Denali Park, Alaska, the author, April 2005), 431-32, 436-37, Mike Tranel interview, October 19, 2006.
- ¹¹¹ NPS, *DENA Draft Backcountry Management Plan...* (February 2003), 209-10, 225-26; *Anchorage Daily News*, January 6, 2005, B-1.
- ¹¹² NPS, *DENA Revised Draft Backcountry Management Plan...* (April 2005), 41, 71, 101, 183, 187-88.
- ¹¹³ Eleanor Huffines, "Alaska," *America's Wilderness* (Wilderness Society newsletter), 7 (Summer 2005), 4, Paul Anderson, review comments, March 2007.
- ¹¹⁴ The plan noted (on pp. 44 and 64) that Area A comprised 6 percent of the entire park and preserve, which constituted 9.2 percent of NPS land outside of the Old Park.
- ¹¹⁵ NPS, *DENA Final Backcountry Management Plan...* (January 2006), 46, 157-58; *Federal Register* 71 (March 14, 2006), 13160-61.
- ¹¹⁶ See the final regulations for the new NPS areas, as noted in *Federal Register* 46 (June 17, 1981), 31860.
- ¹¹⁷ NPS, *DENA General Management Plan* (November 1986), 37, 45, 195; Hollis Twitchell interview, January 12, 2007.
- ¹¹⁸ Hollis Twitchell interview, January 12, 2007; Norris, *Alaska Subsistence*, 184, 205, 233 (endnote 15).
- ¹¹⁹ NPS, *Subsistence Management Plan, DENA* (revised August 18, 2000), chapter 5, page 5-6; Twitchell interview.
- ¹²⁰ Don Callaway, interview with the author, November 8, 2006; Steve Carwile interview, December 1, 2006; Twitchell interview.
- ¹²¹ Steve Carwile interview, December 1, 2006; William E. Simeone, *Wild Resource Harvests and Uses by Residents of Cantwell, Alaska 2000*, Technical Paper Number 272 (Juneau, ADF&G Division of Subsistence, September 2002), 15, 19.
- ¹²² Twitchell interview; Paul Anderson interview, April 12, 2007.
- ¹²³ Twitchell interview.
- ¹²⁴ SAR, 2003, 9; Peter Armington, emails to the author, November 16 and December 12, 2006. The trio was brought before the U.S. Attorney's Office in Fairbanks; two paid \$1,000 fines, while the third paid a \$250 fine.
- ¹²⁵ Paul Anderson to the author, review comments, April 16, 2007.
- ¹²⁶ Don Callaway interview, November 8, 2006; Paul Anderson interview, April 12, 2007; Anderson review comments, April 16, 2007. Specific definitions came from the 1986 GMP (p. 195); from *U.S. House Report 96-97* (p. 280); and *U.S. Senate Report 96-413* (p. 269).
- ¹²⁷ NPS, *A Compilation and Review of Information Pertaining to Use of ORVs as Access for Subsistence Purposes in the Cantwell area by Federally Qualified Subsistence Users, A Report to the Superintendent, DENA*, July 9, 2005, pp. 6, 55, 106; Twitchell interview.
- ¹²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁹ NPS, *Cantwell Subsistence Traditionally Employed ORV Determination, Final Determination, DENA*, July 22, 2005; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 1, 2005, B-7.
- ¹³⁰ Paul Anderson, review comments, April 16, 2007. These criteria included 1) an established traditional pattern of ORV use for subsistence access that occurred within the evaluated area in what is now Denali National Park and Preserve prior to 1978, 2) a consistent pattern of use by successive generations excluding

generations beyond the control of the community or area, and 3) a significant community practice and pattern of subsistence ORV use (rather than individual practice) recurring in specific seasons for many years.

¹³³ NPS, *Cantwell Subsistence ORV Management Preliminary Alternatives Newsletter*, DENA, March 2006 (p. 3); SAR, 2005, 21; NPS, "National Park Service to Hold Public Hearing on Proposed Temporary Closure..." (DENA Press Release), July 23, 2005. As noted above, two of the three sanctioned ORV routes had been identified in late 1994, but the Cantwell Creek trail had not.

¹³⁴ NPS, *Environmental Assessment, Cantwell Subsistence Off-Road Vehicle Management*, DENA, *Internal Review Draft* (Anchorage?, the author, August 2006), 29-30.

¹³⁵ NPS, "National Park Service to Issue Subsistence Permits and Hold Public Hearing" (DENA Press Release), July 19, 2006.

¹³⁶ AK2Day, July 11, 2007; Mike Tranel email, August 24, 2007; NPS, *Finding of No Significant Impact, Cantwell Subsistence Off-Road Vehicle Management Environmental Assessment*, DENA, September 18, 2007; Steve Carwile interview, November 16, 2007.

¹³⁷ NPS, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory, Alaska Region*, various issues, 1993 to 1996. The IBP, initiated in 1996, was similar to the Commercial Use License (see Chapter 9), which had been in use since 1981.

¹³⁸ Robert K. Yearout (WASO) to Regional Director, Alaska Region, June 11, 1997, in "C3823 IBP Converted to CP (Air Taxi Operation DENA)" file, AKRO Concessions files; *Christian Science Monitor*, September 8, 1997, 4.

¹³⁹ *Anchorage Daily News*, October 15, 1999, C-1; *Federal Register* 64 (September 13, 1999), 49503.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*; Littlepage, "Good Fight," 15; *Federal Register* 64 (September 13, 1999), 49503; NPS, "Planning for the Backcountry of Denali National Park and Preserve, Invitation to Public Open Houses" (DENA Press Release), ca. September 1999; Mike Tranel interview, October 19, 2006.

¹⁴¹ NPS, "NPS Seeking Ideas on Managing the Backcountry of Denali National Park and Preserve" (DENA press release), January 2001; *Anchorage Daily News*, February 27, 2001, B-1; Elizabeth G. Daerr, "Regional Report on NPCA's Work in the Parks," *National Parks* 75 (May-June 2001), p. 20. The park newsletter, the *Denali Dispatch*, had been published since the mid-1990s.

¹⁴² *Anchorage Daily News*, January 18, 2002, B-3; May 15, 2002, B-1; *Federal Register* 68 (February 25, 2003), 8782-83.

¹⁴³ The quote is from park superintendent Paul Anderson from the *Anchorage Daily News*, June 15, 2005, B-3.

¹⁴⁴ NPS, *DENA Draft Backcountry Management Plan, General Management Plan Amendment, Environmental Impact Statement* (February 2003), 56, 94.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 56-61.

¹⁴⁶ *Federal Register* 68 (February 25, 2003), 8783; *Federal Register* 68 (May 2, 2003), 23485; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, April 23, 2003, A-1, A-11.

¹⁴⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, June 8, 2003, B-3.

¹⁴⁸ As noted in the revised draft plan, 8,301 of the 9,341 responses were form letters. The "vast majority" of these came from devotees of either the Wilderness Society or the National Parks Conservation Association; another 300 "addressed only aircraft issues" and were generated by members of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association. NPS, *DENA Revised Draft Backcountry Management Plan...* (April 2005), 1, 431-32, 436-41. AOPA members sent in about 400 form letters—not 8,000, as noted in the *Anchorage Daily News*, June 15, 2005, B-3.

¹⁴⁹ *Federal Register* 69 (July 27, 2004), 44678, and *Federal Register* 70 (April 26, 2005), 21440-41.

¹⁵⁰ NPS, *DENA Draft Backcountry Management Plan...* (February 2003), 57, 105; NPS, *DENA Revised Draft Backcountry Management Plan...* (April 2005), 193, 442-68; Mike Tranel interview, October 19, 2006.

¹⁵¹ *Federal Register* 70 (April 26, 2005), 21440-41; NPS, "DENA Releases Revised Draft Backcountry Management Plan" (DENA Press Release), April 25, 2005. Page 2 of the newly-released plan (NPS, *DENA Revised Draft Backcountry Management Plan...*, April 2005) gave a detailed description of the differences between the February 2003 draft and the April 2005 revision.

¹⁵² NPS, *DENA Revised Draft Backcountry Management Plan...* (April 2005), 41-42, 70-74, 101, 511-15. Two of the 46 Old Park backcountry units—those which surrounded Mount McKinley and Mount Foraker, respectively—also included a small amount of New Park acreage.

¹⁵³ NPS, "DENA Releases Revised Draft Backcountry Management Plan" (DENA Press Release), April 25, 2005, *Federal Register* 70 (April 26, 2005), 21440-41; *Federal Register* 70 (May 31, 2005), 30969-70; *Federal Register* 70 (June 28, 2005), 37108.

¹⁵⁴ NPS, *Final Backcountry Management Plan, General Management Plan Amendment, Environmental Impact Statement*, DENA (January 2006), 2, 179.

¹⁵⁵ *Federal Register* 71 (January 19, 2006), 3118-19; NPS, "DENA Releases Final Backcountry Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement" (DENA press release), January 18, 2006, in DENA Public Affairs files.

¹⁵⁶ Mike Tranel interview, October 19, 2006.

- ¹⁰⁷ The revised draft had espoused a five-tiered management system, but the NPS's preferred alternative recommended no acreage in Area E, its most restrictive classification.
- ¹⁰⁸ NPS, *DENA Revised Draft Backcountry Management Plan...* (April 2005), 41, 70, 101; NPS, *Final Backcountry Management Plan...* (January 2006), 2-3, 36, 44, 81. The Ruth Glacier Special Use Area, first propounded in the revised draft, remained unchanged in the final plan.
- ¹⁰⁹ NPS, "DENA Releases Final Backcountry Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement" (DENA press release), January 18, 2006; *Federal Register* 71 (March 14, 2006), 13160-61.
- ¹¹⁰ NPS, *Commercial Services Directory, Alaska Region*, various annual issues, 1996 to 2006; NPS, *Final South Denali Implementation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* (Denali Park, the author, April 2006), 317.
- ¹¹¹ SAR, 1995, 2; Steve Carwile interview, October 25, 2006.
- ¹¹² Mike Tranel interview, October 25, 2006.
- ¹¹³ *Anchorage Daily News*, August 5, 1995, C-1; July 31, 1996, D-1, D-4; May 12, 1997, B-1, B-4; "Tourism," *Alaska Business Monthly* 12 (November 1996), 14. The lodge is actually 43 miles "as the crow flies" from Mount McKinley.
- ¹¹⁴ SAR, 1995, 3; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 27, 1995, B-3.
- ¹¹⁵ *Federal Register* 60 (October 25, 1995), 54705; *Federal Register* 61 (March 25, 1996), 12095-96; NPS, *Revised Draft, Development Concept Plan, Environmental Impact Statement, South Side Denali Alaska* (Denver, the author, March 1996), iv, 13, 31-36, 209-10.
- ¹¹⁶ *Federal Register* 61 (March 25, 1996), 12095-96; *Federal Register* 61 (May 13, 1996), 22072; *New York Times*, April 28, 1996, V:3; Chip Dennerlein, "Regional Report," *National Parks* 70 (July-August 1996), 22; SAR, 1996, 1-2; *Anchorage Daily News*, November 4, 1996, B-1; December 1, 1996, WA 9.
- ¹¹⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, November 4, 1996, B-1; November 7, 1996, B-5; November 18, 1996, C-1; November 20, 1996, B-1, B-3.
- ¹¹⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, January 8, 1997, C-1.
- ¹¹⁹ *Federal Register* 62 (January 23, 1997), 3521; NPS, *Development Concept Plan, South Side, Denali, Alaska* (Denver, the author, February 1997), iii-vii, 14-22; NPS, *Final Development Concept Plan, Environmental Impact Statement, South Side, Denali, Alaska* (Denver, the author, December 1996), v-vii, 35-42; Katherine M. Heinrich, "NPS Finalizes Denali Plans," *National Parks* 71 (May-June 1997), pp. 21-22.
- ¹²⁰ *Anchorage Daily News*, May 1, 1997, B-2; May 2, 1997, B-6.
- ¹²¹ *Anchorage Daily News*, April 22, 1999, F-1, F-4.
- ¹²² Matanuska-Susitna Borough, *Petersville Road Corridor Management Plan*, August 1998; see www.co.mat-su.ak.us/denali/documents/Petersville%20Road%20Corridor.pdf.
- ¹²³ *Anchorage Daily News*, January 21, 1999, B-1; March 30, 1999, B-1.
- ¹²⁴ *Anchorage Daily News*, December 14, 1999, B-1.
- ¹²⁵ *Anchorage Daily News*, May 19, 2003, B-1, B-7.
- ¹²⁶ *Federal Register* 69 (February 13, 2004), 7253-54; *Anchorage Daily News*, April 15, 2004, B-2; NPS, *Draft South Denali Implementation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* (Denali Park, the author, September 2005), 221.
- ¹²⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, April 15, 2004, B-1, B-2.
- ¹²⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, April 13, 2005, G-4; NPS, *Draft South Denali Implementation Plan*, September 2005, 25-29, 247, Figure 2-10 and 2-11; *AK2Day*, September 14, 2005; *Federal Register* 70 (September 21, 2005), 55414-15.
- ¹²⁹ *Anchorage Daily News*, November 2, 2005, G-4; November 9, 2005, G-1; NPS, *Final South Denali Implementation Plan* (April 2006), 237, 245.
- ¹³⁰ *AK2Day*, May 1, 2006; NPS, *Final South Denali Implementation Plan* (April 2006), 26-30, 40-50 plus the "Summary of Changes" page before the executive summary.
- ¹³¹ *Federal Register* 71 (May 5, 2006), 26498; *Federal Register* 71 (June 13, 2006), 34159; *Federal Register* 71 (September 18, 2006), 54687-88.
- ¹³² Steve Carwile interview, October 31, 2006; NPS, *Final South Denali Implementation Plan* (April 2006), 300.
- ¹³³ *Anchorage Daily News*, October 10, 1999, F-1.
- ¹³⁴ *Anchorage Daily News*, September 30, 2001, J-1, J-4.
- ¹³⁵ *Anchorage Daily News*, July 5, 1996, E-1, E-2.
- ¹³⁶ Ginny Fay, "A History of Alaska's Mega Projects," unpub. mss., Alaska Conservation Alliance, June 2003, 17, in Denali Administrative History Collection; www.usibelli.com/chron.html.
- ¹³⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, October 10, 1999, F-1; November 9, 2005, F-1, F-5.
- ¹³⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, November 9, 2005, F-5.
- ¹³⁹ *Anchorage Daily News*, September 30, 2001, J-1, J-4.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Anchorage Daily News*, March 2, 2002, B-1.
- ¹⁴¹ Rebecca Adams, "Coal Takes Stronger Position in Nation's Energy Strategy," *CQ Weekly* 60 (June 1, 2002), 1440-47; 107th Congress, H.R. 4 EAS (April 25, 2002), Sec. 1237, in www.thomas.gov.
- ¹⁴² *Anchorage Daily News*, November 20, 2002, A-1; November 9, 2005, F-1, F-5.

- ¹⁹⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, November 9, 2005, F-5. The bill, which became Public Law 109-58, was H.R. 6 in the 109th Congress; Sec. 412 noted the Healy power plant provision.
- ¹⁹⁹ 24th Alaska Legislature, SB 231, Section 62(f); *Anchorage Daily News*, October 18, 2005, D-1, D-4; May 6, 2006, D-1, D-4. The \$12.5 million expenditure had originally been included in HB 463, introduced on February 13, 2006 by Rep. Pete Kelly (R-Fairbanks).
- ²⁰⁰ *Anchorage Daily News*, September 29, 2006, F-1; November 17, 2006, D-4; March 1, 2007, F-1.
- ²⁰¹ SAR, 1983, 1; SAR, 1986, 1; SAR, 1987, 5; *Anchorage Daily News*, September 29, 2002, H-2. The Harper Lodge was Princess Tours' first Alaska hotel.
- ²⁰² *Anchorage Daily News*, August 13, 1989, F-3; August 3, 1991, B-5; *The Milepost*, 1992, pp. 341-42. According to *The Milepost*, the Denali River View Inn, Mount McKinley Motor Lodge, and Sourdough Cabins all opened for the first time in 1992.
- ²⁰³ *The Milepost*, various years, 1981-1993.
- ²⁰⁴ *The Milepost*, various years, 1994-2005.
- ²⁰⁵ "New Hotel Slated for Denali Park Entrance," *Alaska Business Monthly* 16 (September 2000), 7. The third large hotel was the 242-room Denali North Star Inn, which opened at the Healy turnoff in 1996. One year earlier, this "inn" had been housing Endicott Field (North Slope) oil workers; in 1994, its constituent parts had been brought to Healy to accommodate construction crews for the Healy Clean Coal Plant. Since 2005, the facility, called "The Princess Homestead" and owned by the Alaska Hotel Properties subsidiary of Princess Tours, has served as contract employee housing. *Anchorage Daily News*, July 5, 1996, E-2; September 30, 2001, J-1; *The Milepost*, 1996-97 edition, pp. 391, 442-43; Mary Wysong email, November 8, 2006; Jane Bryant email, November 29, 2006.
- ²⁰⁶ On March 20, 1996, an early morning fire—caused by a faulty furnace—destroyed more than half of the Denali Princess Lodge (formerly known as Harper Lodge). Prospects for the tourist season, which was set to begin in just 55 days, seemed dim at first. But in the fire's wake a Princess Tours official, Tom Dow, stated that "We're shooting for being in full operation in the mid-May time frame." After an exhaustive, round-the-clock effort (and \$18-21 million in rebuilding expenses), the job was completed on time and the hotel was ready for the season's first tourists, who arrived on May 14. *Anchorage Daily News*, March 21, 1996, A-1; June 16, 1996, C-1, C-3; "Winter Fire Destroys Buildings," *Alaska Magazine* 62 (August 1996), 12; SAR, 1996, 4.
- ²⁰⁷ Several years before construction commenced, there had been on-again, off-again plans for a large hotel in the area. In March 2000, CIRI and Doyon Ltd. announced plans to jointly open a 350 room hotel, and in August 2001, Holland America first released plans for a 300-room hotel on the property. *Anchorage Daily News*, March 31, 2000, B-6; August 16, 2001, A-1; October 27, 2005, F-1.
- ²⁰⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, December 6, 2005, F-1; June 22, 2006, F-1; Charlie Loeb email, March 12, 2007.
- ²⁰⁹ *Anchorage Daily News*, June 13, 1999, B-1; Dan Randle, "Crisis of Confidence," *Alaska* 66 (August 2000), 26-29; Bruce Woods, "Undeniably Denali," *Alaska* 66 (December/January 2001), 6, 8. Three people, all in their 70s, have died while running the Nenana River over the years: a Massachusetts woman in 1990 and two Georgia women in 1999.
- ²¹⁰ The first known, published use of the term was apparently in the mid-1990s, but some local residents used the name beginning in the late 1980s. *Anchorage Daily News*, August 4, 1996, A-6; Steve Carwile interview, November 3, 2006.
- ²¹¹ Robert M. Thorson, "Spoiled or Preserved? Edgartown's a Gem; Not So the Doorway to Denali," *Hartford Courant*, September 1, 2005, in *AK2Day*, September 15, 2005.
- ²¹² *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, July 17, 2000, A-1; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 5, 2005, H-5; *Juneau Empire*, June 19, 2006, A-3.
- ²¹³ SAR, 1997, 1; 1998, 1; Charlie Loeb to author, email, November 6, 2006; Tim Woster to author, email, November 7, 2006.
- ²¹⁴ "The TRAAK Board" was an acronym for the Governor's Trails and Recreational Access for Alaska Citizens' Advisory Board. This board was established by administrative order in February 1996. See <http://www.gov.state.ak.us/admin-orders/161.html>.
- ²¹⁵ Charlie Loeb email, November 6, 2006; Tim Woster email, November 7, 2006; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, July 17, 2000, A-1, A-6.
- ²¹⁶ *Anchorage Daily News*, November 20, 2000, A-1; Charlie Loeb email, November 6, 2006.
- ²¹⁷ SAR, 2002, 8, 9; Charlie Loeb email, November 6, 2006; Tim Woster email, November 7, 2006; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 3, 2004, D-1.
- ²¹⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, June 26, 2001, D-3; www.runwalkjog.com (Alaska running calendar) for 2006. As noted in Chapter 9, a half-marathon (the Pygmy Tundra Buffalo Run) had been held at the park since the mid-1970s, but that event had generally not been publicized outside of the park vicinity. Steve Carwile interview, November 6, 2006.
- ²¹⁹ *Anchorage Daily News*, February 18, 2001, K-3.
- ²²⁰ *Anchorage Daily News*, March 14, 2002, B-3.

²¹⁶ DENA Press Release, January 28, 2002; Kris Fister email, November 17, 2006.

²¹⁷ SAR, 2003, 35; NPS, "New Assistant Superintendent Selected for DENA" (DENA Press Release, May 13, 2003) and "New Assistant Superintendent for Operations Selected" (DENA Press Release, April 22, 2004), in Public Information Officer's files, DENA.

²¹⁸ As noted in Appendix A, the park's base budget between 1996 and 2005 rose approximately 51 percent, from \$7.2 to \$10.8 million. About half of the budget increase, however, was consumed by inflation. See the "Purchasing Power of Money in the United States from 1774 to 2005" website: <http://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ppowerus/>. In addition to the park base, additional funds come to the park through various project funds, recreational fee (formerly "fee demo") funds, concession franchise fees, special use permit funds, and various miscellaneous funds. Given these additional funding sources, the total park allocation in recent years has been approximately twice the level of base funding. So-called "fee demo" money was authorized under the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program that Congress had authorized in April 1996; these funds, beginning in December 2004, were managed under the provisions of the Federal Lands Recreation Fee Enhancement Act. *Anchorage Daily News*, December 14, 1998, B-1; Shane McGoldrick interview, November 16, 2006; Sec. 315 of Public Law 104-134, signed April 26, 1996; Title VIII of Public Law 108-447, signed December 8, 2004.

²¹⁹ SAR, 1996, 15; SAR, 2004, 42; Julie Wilkerson email, January 30, 2007.

²²⁰ SAR, 1996, 14; SAR, 2004, 9; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 8, 2004, D-3.

²²¹ Ted S. Vinson and David Lofgren, "Denali Park Access Road Icing Problems and Mitigation Options," in Marcia Phillips, Sarah M. Springman, and Lukas U. Arenson, ed., *Permafrost: Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Permafrost, Zurich, Switzerland, 21-25 July 2003* (Lisse, Netherlands, A.A. Balkema, 2003), 1189-94.

²²² Brad Ebel email, August 29, 2006 and March 7, 2007.

²²³ Clare Schuster, telephone interview by Kristen Griffin, September 25, 2000; Clare (Schuster) Curtis email, October 20, 2006; *AK2Day*, May 11, 2004.

²²⁴ *AK2Day*, May 11, 2004; *Anchorage Daily News*, September 29, 2002, G-1; May 10, 2004, B-1, B-9; September 26, 2004, K-3; June 25, 2005, B-1.

²²⁵ Clare Curtis email, October 20, 2006. Oddly enough, the imposition of the registration fee did not necessarily diminish the number of "no-shows." Whereas about 15% of all applicants typically failed to appear at the Savage River check station during the 1995-2003 period, the number of September 2004 "no-shows" was 29.1%, followed by 24.5% in 2005. The percentage in 2006 dropped to 13.5% although according to Curtis, "2006 isn't the best comparison year because of the exceptionally good weather."



Chapter Eleven: Interpretive Issues; The Park from the Visitor's Point of View

The first several chapters of this study have detailed the steps that various major groups over the years—Congress, the National Park Service, the Alaska Railroad, the Alaska Road Commission, the State of Alaska, concessioners, advocacy organizations, and other entities—have played during the park's 90-year history. The activities undertaken by many if not most of these groups had either a direct or indirect effect on the park's visitors. This chapter, by contrast, emphasizes the other end of the telescope, so to speak. Of interest in this chapter is how visitors, over the years, have been attracted to the park, what their perceptions of the park have been, how the experiences of package-tour visitors have differed from those of independent travelers, and what visitor activities have been offered in the park.

Park Interpretation

During the "Cabins-and-Snowshoes Era"

As Chapter 3 notes, Congress established Mount McKinley National Park in 1917. Harry Karstens, the park's first employee, arrived at McKinley Park Station in 1921. For the time being, Karstens was the sole park employee, although by the end of that year he had hired the park's first ranger.

Development proceeded soon afterward. In early 1922, Alaska Engineering Commission crews based at McKinley Park Station had completed the majestic Riley Creek Bridge, and by June 1923 they had completed the last remaining construction hurdles: the completion of a bridge over the Tanana River, and the conversion of the old Tanana Valley Railroad tracks from narrow gauge to standard gauge. Just a month later, President Warren G. Harding dedicated the Alaska Railroad at the "golden spike" ceremony just north of Nenana. After June 1923, passengers were able to ride from Seward all the way to Fairbanks in the same train car; the train's schedule, however, was such that those hoping to visit Mount McKinley National Park typically detrained in the late night or early morning hours.

Despite the construction-related impediments, a few early visitors filtered into the park, some as early as the completion of the rail line to McKinley Park Station. During the summer of 1922 the local railroad station was a rude, converted boxcar; the only local accommodation was Maurice Morino's rustic "Mount McKinley Park Hotel," a roadhouse that had been completed the previous December.¹ The park, at this time, lacked a concessioner; the park's eastern boundary was

four miles west of the tracks; and the only route connecting the railroad station to parkland was a rough trail that the Alaska Road Commission had just laid out. Given those conditions, it is perhaps not surprising that Karstens and his staff recorded just seven park visitors that year. By the following year the NPS had selected its first concessioner—Dan Kennedy—and the Alaska Road Commission had bladed out its first two miles of road west from the railroad depot. Kennedy, for his part, laid out a rustic camp just east of Savage River. Visitation into the park, however, remained anemic; although 217 people got off the train that summer at McKinley Park Station, only 34 visitors ascended the trail and entered the park. Tourism in 1924 was not much better; although the road was by now extended almost all the way to Kennedy's Savage River Camp, continuing difficulties with train schedules limited the number of park visitors to just 62. The level of overall Alaska tourism during this period, it must be noted, was greater than it had ever been before, and by this time businesses in many towns, both along the Pacific Coast and in the Interior as well, were benefiting from the increasing numbers of tourists. Tourism at that time, however, was a mere shadow of what it is today; in all probability, fewer than 10,000 tourists visited Alaska each summer.²

Tourism at Mount McKinley finally began to come into its own in 1925. The Mount McKinley Tourist and Transportation Company—minus Dan Kennedy, who had helped establish the firm a year earlier—was the park's concessioner that year; the company was run by Fairbanks mayor Thomas Marquam and Richardson Highway Transportation Company chief James L. Galen, while Robert Sheldon served as camp manager.³ These three men were well-connected and well-funded. They were experienced with tourists and respected throughout the territory, and for more than a decade they proved to be ideal concessioners. They provided accommodations that were well-suited to the park's visitors. The concessioner thus gave tourists the proper balance of comfort and adventure, and made a consistent profit while doing so.

During the period in which the Mount McKinley Tourist and Transportation Company operated as the sole park concessioner, most visitors to the Alaska Railbelt took package tours that combined the services offered by the major transportation carriers. By the early 1920s, the

Sled dog demonstration, July 1959.
DENA 11-60, Denali National Park and
Preserve Museum Collection



During its earliest years, Savage Camp was a small collection of temporary tent structures: a horse barn and corral in the center, with a main tent structure to the right, and individual sleeping tents to the left. Karstens Library Collection #1476

main inland carriers were the Copper River and Northwestern Railroad, which in 1911 had completed its line from Cordova to Chitina and on to the Kennecott copper mine; the Richardson Highway Transportation Company, which hauled stages (small buses) over the former Valdez-Fairbanks wagon road; the Alaska Railroad, noted above,

which opened to through traffic in 1923; and the White Pass and Yukon Route, which in 1922 began to offer direct steamboat service between Nenana and Dawson City, Yukon Territory.⁴

In the first two years after the Alaska Railroad's completion, there was little coordination, on



Transportation routes of the 1920s package tours are shown here, and involved several modes including steamship, railroad, river steamer and overland road. Alaska's "Great Circle Tour" via the Alaska Railroad, Yukon River, and White Pass & Yukon Railway required 28 to 30 days of travel. Karstens Library Collection, Alaska Railroad Brochure 1927

either pricing or schedules, between these transportation companies. But during the winter of 1923-24, the various carriers worked out a “Gentlemen’s Agreement” that pledged greater cooperation, and thereafter most tourists visiting inland Alaska were part of a tour package. The “Great Circle Tour” or “Yukon Belt Tour” combined a Yukon River steamboat trip with an Alaska Railroad trip. The “Golden Belt Tour” combined an Alaska Railroad trip with a ride along the Richardson Highway and, optionally, a ride on the Copper River and Northwestern Railroad. Still others adopted the “All-Rail Tour” and took an Alaska Railroad round trip from Seward to Fairbanks and back. Because Mount McKinley was a major territorial icon—the Alaska Railroad, in fact, adopted “the Mount McKinley Route” as its slogan in 1924—taking a trip through the area was a primary destination of most Alaska visitors, and beginning in the mid-1920s many thousands of visitors marveled at Mount McKinley through the windows of a train car. Tour packages, moreover, typically gave visitors the option to detrain at McKinley Park

concessioner’s auto stages and were then escorted up to Savage River camp, twelve miles away. (See Chapter 4.) Savage Camp, which was substantially expanded and improved in 1926, was the tourists’ primary park destination, and the great majority of park tourists spent all of their evenings there.⁶ One of the most popular tours that departed from camp was the “Big Game Drive,” which was a nine-mile horse-drawn stagecoach or automobile trip up the Savage River valley to “Caribou Camp” at its head; brochures noted that sheep, caribou, bears, and foxes might be seen along the route.⁷ The Alaska Road Commission, supporting the company’s effort, improved this route during the summer of 1927. The following year, the ARC chipped in again and roughed out a two-mile pack trail down the west side of the Savage River, beginning at the bridge, and during the late 1920s and early 1930s the concessioner offered horseback trips over the route. To foster access and provide an additional activity, the ARC bladed out an airfield at Savage Camp in 1930, after which scenic flights were periodically offered to adventurous tourists.



Savage Camp provided park visitors with accommodations, meals and activities. The family pictured above travelled by stagecoach along the Big Game Drive to the headwaters of Savage River where they were served lunch. Candy Waugaman Collection

Station for either 24 or 48 hours before resuming their travels. Park visitation totals, however, suggest that a fairly strong majority of Alaska Railroad tourists—regardless of the tour package they selected—thrilled to views of Mt. McKinley from a train window but chose not to head west into the park.⁵

Those tourists who opted for a McKinley Park vacation were met at the station by the conces-

sioner for the relatively few tourists who were able to arrange a park visit that exceeded 48 hours, the concessioner offered many ways to see the more remote portions of the park. One two-day saddle-horse trip, for example, took the visitor up the “Big Game Drive” route to Caribou Camp; it then headed west into the upper Sanctuary River drainage south of Double Mountain before descending the valley to the road. Another saddle-horse offering was a trip to the concessioner’s



Park superintendent Harry Karstens, seen center above, often stopped at Savage Camp and entertained visitors with stories of his Mt. McKinley climb. Karstens Library Collection #844

Igloo tent camp via Caribou Creek and the northern slopes of Double Mountain. And for the most dedicated adventurers, eight-day saddle horse trips could be taken all the way to the Copper Mountain area and the remarkable scenery surrounding Muldrow Glacier. In order to support these trips, the concessioner built small tent camps at Toklat River and Copper Mountain as well as at Igloo Creek. These trips, by necessity, were modified or eliminated altogether when construction of the park road made these previously-distant points more accessible. As park road construction progressed farther into the park, visitors were taken to more distant road destinations on “interpretive” auto trips.

What visitors learned while visiting the park was an eclectic mix of what the Alaska tourist brochures, the concessioner, and the park provided them. Contemporary accounts suggest that camp manager Robert Sheldon, along with other concessions personnel, provided most of the on-the-spot interpretation to park visitors. NPS staff, at the time, was so preoccupied with game patrols, building construction, and other tasks that most rangers and other park personnel had relatively little direct contact with visitors. Supt. Karstens, however, frequently stopped at Savage Camp and told visitors about his Mount McKinley ascent, and at headquarters, rangers as early as 1926 were catering to curious visitors who stopped at the

newly-moved kennels; “the Alaskan sled-dogs,” Karstens wrote, “are always a source of interest to our park visitors here.”⁸

Park personnel had other interpretive jobs, too. During the mid-1920s, Karstens spent “a great deal of time ... in answering letters of inquiring from prospective visitors, etc.” He complained that “in the absence of a park folder, it is necessary to write quite lengthy letters on the various topics of interest.” During the winter of 1925-26, park staff began assembling the first park interpretive folder, hoping to have it ready by the following summer. In 1927 the first such guide appeared, bearing the rather inelegant title *Rules and Regulations, Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska*. Two years later, an updated and expanded product appeared, called *Circular of General Information Regarding Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska*.⁹ Ever since the 1920s, the agency has had either booklets or brochures available to park visitors.¹⁰

Park staff also reached out to provide information to other Alaskans. In April 1924, informal weekly or bi-weekly “news notes” about the park and the McKinley Park community began appearing in the major Railbelt newspapers. By July 1927, these tidbits—which were probably written by the park’s clerk, Ralph Mackie—had evolved into the “McKinley Parklets.” Later called

As this July 1, 1927 photo shows, park visitors stopped by the superintendent's office at park headquarters on their way from the railroad station to their destination at Savage Camp. Haskell Photo, DENA #14976, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



"McKinley Park News," these continued at least until the mid-1930s.¹¹

During the depths of the Great Depression, the park established the first inklings of an interpretive program. In mid-May 1932, well-known wildlife biologist Joseph M. Dixon arrived at the park for a summer-long faunal study (see Chapter 12), and accompanying him during much of his field work was a newly-appointed ranger, David Kaye. The two, according to Superintendent Harry Liek, were "spending much time studying conditions among the wild animals with the view of determining the cause for our great

losses in sheep." Liek noted that Kaye "has taken to the naturalist work with a vim," and by the end of June he had given seven "lectures on the subjects." He gave additional lectures in July.¹² Dixon, during the summer, took "exceptionally fine colored slides" of the park's animal and plant life, and beginning in 1933, Supt. Liek repeatedly gave two different talks to the assembled Savage Camp visitors: one that featured the park's plant and animal species, the other (complete with motion-picture footage) detailing the ascent of Mount McKinley that he, Alfred Lindley, Erling Strom and Grant Pearson had undertaken the previous year.¹³ The following year, Liek followed

Ranger Aubrey F. Houston presented interpretive talks about the flora and fauna of the park to Savage Camp guests, as seen in this photograph taken near the camp. Ickes Collection, B75-175-331, Anchorage Museum of History & Art





This 1929 photo shows the six-sided interpretive kiosk, and park visitors at the McKinley Station railroad depot being met by the Mt. McKinley Tourist & Transportation Company touring cars. Herbert Heller Collection, 79-44-1305, University of Alaska Fairbanks Archive

a similar pattern; he gave 20 slide shows and 6 motion-picture presentations at Savage Camp.¹⁴

In 1935, the park attracted 877 visitors, more than had visited in any year since 1930. In response, Liek asked Aubrey Houston, who had been a park ranger for the past year, to take over Savage Camp interpretive duties. Houston, that summer, gave talks on the park's flora and fauna.¹⁵ The following summer, with visitation at an all-time high, Houston continued his Savage Camp talks; in addition, the superintendent invited visitors to his residence at headquarters and gave a number of talks (accompanied by movie footage) about his Mount McKinley ascent.¹⁶ In 1937, both the mountaineering and biology programs were again shown; Liek gave most of his programs at the park headquarters, while Edward (Ted) Ogston, along with Houston, conducted the flora and fauna program at Savage River Camp.¹⁷ The concessioner, since 1935, had operated a lunch station at Camp Denali (at Mile 66 on the park road, where Camp Eielson was later located), but the NPS made no attempt during this period to conduct interpretive activities either here or at any other place west of Savage River Camp.

Interpretive Growth, 1938-1956

By 1938, change was in the air. Under federal auspices, a large hotel was being constructed adjacent to the McKinley Park railroad station. That summer, however, the NPS moved to expand its interpretive offerings at Savage River Camp. As before, Aubrey Houston and Harry Liek continued to provide programs on the park's flora and fauna and the 1932 ascent, respectively. In

addition, Houston began offering nature walks in the Savage Camp area (in midsummer these were held almost daily), and he also led occasional auto caravan trips out the park road. Houston, at one point, even gave a flora-and-fauna talk to the residents of the new Civilian Conservation Corps camp.¹⁸ A short-lived "museum"—which may also have been Houston's handiwork—was housed within a six-sided kiosk near the railroad depot. Years later, a writer who had spent time at the park in 1938 recalled that "visitors stood outside the small structure and looked inside at wildlife and photo displays."¹⁹

The new McKinley Park Hotel opened on June 1, 1939, and that summer the park's interpretive activities shifted accordingly. According to new superintendent Frank Been, "the hotel management has cooperated in providing adequate space and seating facilities and welcomes this means for entertaining its guests. Needless to say, visitors have been most appreciative of this service." Ted Ogston gave the lectures for most of the summer; after his late-August departure, Senior Clerk Gerald Janes filled in for the remainder of the season. Been was eager to offer what he termed an "active educational service" to the visiting public. To fulfill that goal, he assigned a ranger to accompany each of the bus trips that the concessioner sent out the park road. (As noted in Chapter 5, the park's concessioner and bus-trip provider was still the Mount McKinley Tourist and Transportation Company, and it would remain that way until the close of the 1941 season.) The NPS's on-board interpretive service, which was conducted by Louis Corbley but

This 1939 photo shows (left to right) the interpretive kiosk, the McKinley Station railroad depot, and the Mt. McKinley Tourist & Transportation Company warehouse. DENA 4-72, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



implemented by John Rumohr and Ted Ogston, allowed NPS rangers the opportunity to personally interact with almost all of the park's 2,262 visitors that year.²⁰

Been, unlike the park's two previous superintendents, had experience as a park naturalist, and he obviously enjoyed his former job.²¹ Midway through the 1939 season, he wrote to agency director Arno Cammerer about the park's newly-expanded interpretive program:

The sourdough park rangers of Mount McKinley National Park have become naturalists and lecturers in the program for public contacts established here. Chief Ranger Corbley and Ranger Rumohr, hard bitten Alaskans from way back, and Ranger Ogston ... are showing their mettle in an activity which is a far cry from mushing dog teams. The fine spirit which the men have shown in this educational work is almost inspirational.

Due to the small ranger force and lack of maintenance crew, the rangers have been jacks of all trades. Hence, enforced occupation on maintenance jobs ... has kept the rangers from one of their most important duties—direct service to park visitors. The presence of the CCC camp has liberated the rangers to a large extent so that we have felt free to establish a definite educational program.

When the train bearing tourists arrives, a ranger is at the station to meet the group and accompanies it to the

hotel. There by moving about among the new arrivals, answering questions and being generally pleasant, a National Park Service contact is established. From the hotel, bus trips embark for sight-seeing and to carry people to Camp Eielson, a tent hotel sixty-six miles inside the park. A ranger accompanies each bus. If there are more buses than rangers, the men move from one conveyance to the other during the trip...

A unique feature of these trips is the night time travel. Usually, departure from the hotel is in the afternoon and causes the buses to return about midnight or later. One party, a few weeks ago, started out just after midnight and returned for a late breakfast. ... The rangers accompany these expeditions with fine spirit and the tourists enjoy them because there is no darkness. In fact, night time offers the greatest possibility for seeing that unforgettable spectacle, Mount McKinley, as the clouds are less apt to obscure the view.

At the hotel, illustrated lectures are given in the evening; or during the day, if the arrangement of groups justifies a day time presentation. As windows must be darkened for either day or night lectures, the conditions are practically the same.

A feature of constant attraction, to which many visitors return during their stay in the park, is the kennel of Alaska huskies. These fine friendly

animals are always as glad to see the visitors as the latter are the former. Frequently, the rangers demonstrate the use of dog sleds by harnessing up a team. Then excitement prevails for all—the dogs are raring to go, rangers at wit's end to keep dogs and sled on even keel and tourists shouting and hopping around attempting to photograph the melee. ... The pleasure of the tourists is increased because of a rather general impression that huskies are savage beasts.

To simplify and improve the exhibition of this typically Alaskan institution, Ranger Rumohr is working out a device for placing a dog sled on inconspicuous wheels. Then we expect to be able to give the dogs much needed exercise as well as to provide more adequate demonstrations. As dog teams are giving way to airplanes, we hope that the McKinley Park huskies will always be retained as part of the historical interest of the park as well as of the Territory.²²

In 1940, the interpretive program was largely a continuation of the previous year's activities, and Supt. Been continued to stress the importance of interpretation—which included both the lectures and the guide service—in park operations. There were, in addition, two new activities. One, conducted occasionally, was a ranger-led hike from the park hotel to Horseshoe Lake. (This 1.5-mile trail was completed by Alaska Road Commission personnel during the summer of 1940.) In addition, rangers began sled-dog demonstrations that year at park headquarters; they did so in recog-

nition of the consistent fondness that visitors showed toward sled dogs, and because sled dogs were a well-known Alaska icon. Been, writing to doubtlessly-skeptical superiors in Washington, noted that “the hitching up and ‘mushing’ of a dog team, which demonstration is made possible by having a sled mounted on rubber tired wheels, never fails to arouse the tourists’ enthusiasm and many consider it the high point of their visit.”²³

Been, pleased by the public's response to his interpretive innovations, moved to establish a new, seasonal ranger-naturalist position at the park. In June 1941 Herbert Brazil, a University of Alaska graduate student, commenced work. That summer, Brazil shouldered most of the park's interpretive program responsibilities, which consisted of hotel lectures, bus trips, sled dog demonstrations, and guided hikes. He performed those duties admirably; because of time conflicts, Supt. Been and the park's equipment operator, William Clemons, also led a number of interpretive activities that summer.²⁴

Given the onset of World War II, Alaska was closed to civilian tourism for the duration, and in 1942 only 63 visitors were recorded at Mount McKinley National Park. But military officials showed a continuing interest in the park, and on April 10, 1943, the park hotel became the home base for the Mount McKinley U.S. Army Recreation Camp, and for the next two years military personnel from throughout Alaska came to the park for much-needed rest and relaxation. Most of the facilities that the soldiers used were located in the immediate vicinity of the hotel and were provided by the army. NPS staff, however, did what they could to provide recreational opportunities. The onset of war had severely reduced the number of park employees; in June and July 1942,



In 1939, ranger John Rumohr experimented with attaching wheels to a dog sled so it could be used for summer sled dog demonstrations. No other national park unit offered this interpretive activity, which was begun on a full-time basis in 1940. DENA 11-135, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



This 1940 photo shows the sled dog demonstration held at the park's dog kennels near headquarters. Tour buses brought visitors right up to the kennels area. DENA 11-13.5, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

for example, there were just two people on the park's payroll. But three new employees signed up over the next few months, and in April 1943 all five helped welcome the troops to the park hotel.

During the first several months after the recreation camp opened, Acting Superintendent Grant Pearson gave a number of lectures and showed motion pictures of his 1932 climb up Mount McKinley. Rangers John Rumohr and Oscar Dick, working out of the hotel, showed motion pictures that wildlife biologist Adolph Murie had filmed four years earlier. They also gave talks and conducted dog-sled demonstrations, and beginning in June they accompanied several groups that drove out the park road. The remaining park staff, Principal Clerk Louis Maupin and Clerk-Stenographer Raye Ann Ayers, remained at headquarters where they provided interpretive information and answered visitors' questions.²⁵

Another addition to the interpretive program was the park museum, which opened in June 1943. The museum, apparently the result of the efforts of Wildlife Ranger Oscar Dick, was located in the original (1925) superintendent's office, at the north edge of the headquarters complex. Grant Pearson noted that the museum, as originally constituted, "contains trophies of some of our better known animals and a flower display." He felt that Dick "did a remarkable job with meager material on hand ... we have had many fine comments on it." That fall, longtime Kantishna resi-

dent Fannie Quigley donated "several interesting items to be placed on display," to which were added items from the 1942 equipment-testing expedition and other accumulated memorabilia. During the war most hotel residents ventured up to headquarters during their stay, and many of those who toured the headquarters area spent a few minutes at the "little log museum."²⁶

By August 1943, the U.S. Army had issued a 30-page booklet outlining the military's recreation program at the park. NPS interpretation, however, suffered that summer; because park employees were obligated to take on a wide range of administrative duties, certain parts of the interpretive program had to be eliminated. Hotel-area interpretation, for example, was limited to "regular illustrated talks." These talks, supplemented by occasional staff-led tours of the headquarters area, continued until the recreation camp closed down in early 1945.²⁷

Because wartime restrictions remained in effect, Alaska remained off-limits to Outside residents during the summer of 1945. The park attracted some Alaskans: military officers, Anchorage business people, and scattered tourists. The hotel, however, was closed, so those that came either camped, stayed at park headquarters, or overnights at the Wonder Lake Ranger Station. Given the small numbers involved, the only interpretation carried on was when visitors toured the park museum.²⁸

Constructed in 1926 as the superintendent's office at the current park headquarters, this building was converted, in its original location, shown here, into the park museum in 1943. It served as such until 1950 when it was moved to the maintenance area of park headquarters and used as an office. DENA 5-2, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



In the spring of 1946, the hotel opened for the first time in 15 months, and for the first time the Alaska Railroad was the active operator of not only the McKinley Park Hotel but the park concessions contract as well.²⁹ That summer, “illustrated talks were given to each group of visitors” to the park hotel. In addition, rangers rode in the concessioner’s buses with groups of visitors “to explain the wonders of the Park to them.” The only literature available for distribution that year was the park information circular.³⁰ But the following summer, additional publications became available; these included a U.S. Geological Survey

map of Alaska and biologist Joseph Dixon’s book, *Birds and Mammals of Mount McKinley National Park*, which had been published in 1938. Adolph Murie’s *The Wolves of Mount McKinley* was added the following year; the book, in its third edition, sold for 75 cents.³¹

Beginning in the summer of 1947, the McKinley Park Hotel was open all year round, and NPS rangers did their best to provide interpretation to all park visitors. Illustrated talks at the hotel remained the primary interpretive vehicle during this period; they were given on a regular basis in



When the McKinley Park Hotel opened in 1939, it provided accommodations and meals and it became the center of most interpretive activities for park visitors. This 1949 photo shows two tour buses in front of the hotel. NPS Photo

the summertime (as often as every other night in July 1948), but during the off-season, talks were provided only “when the hotel manager advised them that the house count was sufficient.” This usually happened 3 to 8 times per month.³² Rangers did not ride along on bus trips during the late 1940s, but they occasionally showed Murie’s wildlife film or assembled slide programs. In July 1949, park management stationed one ranger at “Wonder Lake during the month to furnish information to the visitors to that area,” and in addition, occasional illustrated talks were given

mer ranger who had transferred to the park two years earlier from Lake Texoma National Recreation Area along the Texas-Oklahoma border.³⁵ Nancarrow was the sole interpretive employee for the time being, but in June 1952 James Castren signed on as a new seasonal interpreter. The following year, Castren’s position was replaced by Theodore Lachelt; Nancarrow, meanwhile, stayed on. Ever since that time, the park has had a permanent position (either as naturalist or interpreter) to manage the park’s interpretive activities.³⁶



Having arrived as a park ranger in 1948, William Nancarrow, center, became the first full-time, year-round park naturalist in 1951. He later served at the park as a carpenter and Buildings & Utilities foreman, retiring in 1981. Bruce Thompson Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

in the Anchorage or Fairbanks areas.³³ The park museum remained open, on request, throughout this period; new items added during the late 1940s included the pelt of a beaver killed by a railroad “speeder;” a red fox caught in a wolf trap, a collection of mosses and lichens, and a three-dimensional model of the Mount McKinley massif, the latter created by wildlife ranger Harold Booth.³⁴

In the summer of 1950 the Korean War began, and for the next three years the hotel remained open each summer for civilian tourists, but during the intervening winters, either Army or Air Force personnel filled the hotel seeking relaxation and rest. To assist with the interpretive program, the park in June 1950 hired Elton S. Thayer as a seasonal ranger-naturalist; his was the first such hire in nine years. Thayer remained for the summer. The following June, the park hired its first full-time, year-round park naturalist: William Nancarrow, a for-

Perhaps because of these additional staff, the park was able to broaden its summertime interpretive program. In 1950 Elton Thayer, assisted at times by park ranger James Orr, offered daily illustrated talks at the park hotel on such subjects as “the Wildlife of Denali,” “the Famous 1932 Ascent of Mt. McKinley,” and “the 1942 Army Expedition to the Summit of Mt. McKinley.” They also led nature walks, primarily to Horseshoe Lake. And on occasion, park staff conducted bus tours out the McKinley park road.³⁷ The following summer, Nancarrow crafted an interpretive program that consisted of “a 15-minute talk on the policy, history, size and interesting features of the park” followed by two short movies: “Climb of Mt. McKinley” (about the Army’s 1942 McKinley expedition) and “The Wildlife of the Park” (with 1940 footage from Adolph Murie).³⁸ But by 1952, he had discarded the rescue-expedition film and replaced it with a second wildlife movie. He and Castren also offered two slide programs, they led hikes to Horseshoe Lake, and they began

In 1952, Building #22 (the original superintendent's office turned museum) was moved again to a location above the park road across from park headquarters. The building served as an exhibit room for visitors until 1959. DENA 13-5, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



to hold “informational sessions” in the hotel lobby to answer visitors’ questions. Occasional activities in the headquarters area—specifically, orientation talks at the naturalist’s office and the dog kennels—rounded out the program.³⁹ The 1953 program consisted of hotel talks and dog demonstrations; guided walks to Horseshoe Lake were also offered, although many additional visitors took advantage of the new self-guided trail pamphlet that park staff had developed the previous summer.⁴⁰ One point of interest that was not available to visitors during this period was the park museum; in July 1950 it was closed down and moved to another headquarters location, primarily because the museum building was judged to be structurally unsafe.⁴¹

In winter, activities surrounding the hotel during the early 1950s took on an entirely new cast because of its role as an army and air force recreation camp. As in World War II, military authorities created a diversified recreational program; activities offered to the soldiers and airmen included skiing, skating, and tobogganing. To complement that program, Orr and Nancarrow met with the local military brass to “work out a program of interpretation and orientation.” Based on the results of that November 1950 meeting, NPS staff over the next several winters offered a two-pronged interpretive program: the presentation of frequent illustrated talks at the hotel, plus a bus trip to the park headquarters, where a ranger would “hook up the dog team and demonstrate this method of travel.” Each of these programs would be offered every two to three days throughout the winter.⁴² Superintendent Pearson, during this period, also played a continuing interpretive role. Given the presence of the Army Arctic Indoctrination School at the

Big Delta Air Force Base (later known as Fort Greely), Pearson made frequent trips there to give talks and show movies, primarily during the wintertime, between February 1950 and July 1952.⁴³

The military left in the early spring of 1953. That summer, recognizing that the military would not return, the Alaska Railroad decided to keep the hotel open to civilian use for the upcoming winter. Despite relatively low visitor totals, NPS staff that winter cobbled together a series of illustrated talks, films, dog demonstrations, and visits to the park’s information center, which was located in the naturalist’s office at headquarters.⁴⁴ The hotel remained closed during the winters that followed, but the summertime program for the next several years remained similar to those of previous years.

During the mid-1950s, owing to the lack of alternatives, the concessioner was largely responsible for taking visitors to the park’s main points of interest. Those interested in heading out to the western end of the park road could take either a “White” brand Navy-surplus bus or a smaller limousine. But the sparse visitation during these years, combined with the concessioner’s marginal finances (see Chapter 6), meant that many visitors never got beyond the hotel-headquarters area. In July 1955, for example, Wonder Lake Ranger Ralph Turman noted that “the hotel bus has been [here] two or three times during the month while the limousine has reached this point four or five times,” and in August “the Hotel limousine was observed only a couple of times and the bus was not seen.”⁴⁵ These trips were probably all-day affairs, inasmuch as the train schedule brought tourists to the park at either 12:30 a.m. or 4:30 a.m.⁴⁶



Richard Prasil, above in 1956, prepares interpretive displays inside the exhibit room at park headquarters. On the log wall to the right is a bear hide and the three-dimensional model of the Mount McKinley massif created by wildlife ranger Harold Booth. DENA 13-2, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

The NPS offered a diversity of interpretive activities during the mid-1950s. Beginning in 1954, the park museum was open again, so visitors during this period had the choice of both talks and films at the park hotel, and at park headquarters, there were both dog-sled demonstrations and talks at the museum. A few visitors took guided walks to Horseshoe Lake; many more, however, picked up an NPS pamphlet and took the self-guided hike to Horseshoe Lake and followed numbered posts along the trail.⁴⁷

A more detailed view of the park's interpretive program can be seen in the park's *Report on Information and Interpretive Services* for 1955. It noted that

Four programs were scheduled: two narrated wildlife films, an illustrated talk on the effect of seasons on plants and animals, and a program on history and mountain climbing. Museum talks were generally concerned with the history of the park and the early ascents of McKinley. These programs, as well as the dog team

demonstrations, were conducted six days per week throughout the travel season [June 15 through September 14]. Dog team demonstrations involved the harnessing and running of five dogs, and an explanation of the uses of dogs within the area, and a résumé of their history in the park and Alaska. Guided nature walks were scheduled three times each week, and hikes were conducted if more than four people registered for the walk. The number of visitors who took advantage of the nature walks was small, but understandably so, in view of the fact that the average age of the McKinley Park visitor is 50 years, then too, inclement summer weather results in the visitor taking advantage of demand bus trips out in the park when clear days are experienced.⁴⁸

These activities were coordinated by park naturalist Richard Prasil and conducted primarily by seasonal ranger-naturalists Richard Riegelhuth (1954-55), Robert Badaracco (1956), and Thomas Choate (1957).

Construction of the Eielson Visitor Center was well under way in this September 1959 photograph. This Mission 66 visitor center opened to the public in July 1960. DENA 5-8, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



Mission 66 and Its Impacts

Throughout the early to mid-1950s, the park staff was well aware that a road was inching its way from the Richardson Highway (at Paxson) to McKinley Park Station and, as shown in Chapter 6, the widespread recognition that the park would soon be accessible to automobile traffic resulted in plans for various infrastructure and interpretive projects. By early August 1957, when the Denali Highway finally reached the park, the agency had improved several campgrounds along the park road, most notably Savage Campground and Wonder Lake Campground during the summers of 1954 and 1955.

Little thought was given toward interpretation along the park road, however, until park staff began working on the park's *Mission 66 Prospectus* during the winter of 1955-56. (See Chapter 7.) Plans, at that time, stated that a proposed road between Fairbanks and the park would enter the park via the north end of the Savage River Canyon and that it would intersect with the park road near the Savage River bridge. Based on that proposal, Mission 66's initial plans—bold indeed—called for the construction of a large, new public use building in that area. The park's Main Visitor Center, to be located there, would

include an exhibit room, a 300- to 400-person auditorium, a library, and information office. The prospectus also called for a second visitor center, at Wonder Lake, which would include a 100-person auditorium along with an exhibit room and an information office. Self-guiding nature trails, similar to what had already been implemented for Horseshoe Lake, were planned for Savage River and Polychrome Pass.⁴⁹

That summer, a team from the agency's regional office (in San Francisco) spent a day along the park road looking over what the park staff had proposed. Out of that visit came an initial suggestion to emphasize two new visitor centers: one at Polychrome Pass, the other at the site of former Camp Eielson. Polychrome Pass, for awhile, was slated to be the park's primary visitor-center site, with Eielson of secondary interest. It was soon discovered, however, that obtaining water at Polychrome Pass was problematic, so these priorities were reversed. By December 1956, the Eielson site had become "first in priority because of its urgent need." Development plans were focused there because "the superlative view of Mount McKinley and other features of the area merit orientational and interpretational exhibits, and as the location is the midpoint of the

concessioner bus tours, the area and building will be utilized heavily.”⁵⁰ Agency interest in a Wonder Lake visitor center soon died away⁵¹, and interpretation at Polychrome was soon downsized to a self-guiding trail, but for the Eielson site, development plans soon turned into action. In early 1957, NPS personnel quickly cobbled together architectural and interpretive plans for the new visitor center. By July, the agency was getting ready to issue a bid for the building’s construction.⁵² The following March a construction contract was awarded to J. B. Warrack, an Anchorage construction firm. Eielson Visitor Center opened to the public in July 1960; a year later, on July 15, 1961, Associate NPS Director Eivind Scoyen visited the park from Washington and dedicated the center in front of an appreciative crowd numbering about 60.⁵³

During the early days of Mission 66 planning, the NPS (as noted above) retained a strong interest in a visitor center at the east end of the park, either in the Savage River area or in the vicinity of the McKinley Park Hotel. The agency, however, felt that it could not move forward until Bureau of Public Roads officials made a decision on where the road from Fairbanks and Nenana would enter the park. In 1956, BPR officials had tentatively decided to build a road through the Savage River Canyon, but during the critical winter of 1956-57—when the decision was made to construct Eielson Visitor Center—BPR withdrew its earlier recommendation and was in a wait-and-see mode. Several months later, BPR officials finally decided that the north-south route through Nenana Canyon was more practical and cost effective than a Savage River route. But by this time, the park’s Mission 66 plans had already gone forward, and the fiscal window of opportunity had passed.⁵⁴



Eielson Visitor Center was dedicated on July 15, 1961. DENA 5-26, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

Park staff had identified a need for roadside interpretive signs several years prior to the Mission 66 program,⁵⁵ but Mission 66 breathed new life into these efforts. Program officials felt that various “orientation exhibits and markers at scenic

turnouts and other appropriate areas [along the park road] is deemed mandatory.” At first they planned for markers at ten locations, soon upped to twelve; several of these were scenic or panoramic view sites, but virtually all offered interpretive markers pertaining to various natural history topics. The intended idea, conceptually, was that “roadside turnouts with exhibits or orientation devices [would] give meaning to the important park features,” by which “not only will enjoyment of the park be increased, but enlistment of the visitor’s intelligent cooperation in the protection and preservation of the area will be assured.”⁵⁶

Soon after the Mission 66 planning effort was commenced, Neil J. (Jim) Reid became the park naturalist. Reid, who was fully aware that the Denali Highway would soon be completed, knew that the park faced a daunting challenge; not only did it need to reach out to traditional visitor populations who arrived by train and stayed in the hotel, but it also had to find a way to appeal to auto-borne tourists, whose accommodations were divided among the park hotel, campgrounds along the park road, and accommodations outside the park. Reid, based on just a few months on the job, recognized that “some of the services that have proven to be highly successful interpretive media” in temperate zone parks (such as campfire and amphitheater programs) “cannot be applied to our most northern National Park.” Instead, “the park road appears to be the logical place and roadside interpretive markers seem to be the best medium to contact the [newly-mobile] park visitor.”⁵⁷

Given that conclusion, Reid in mid-1957 began preparing a roadside interpretive plan that would include “20 roadside orientation and interpretive signs along the 93 miles of park road.” By December 1958, the park plan was calling for a total of 33 interpretive signs at 17 turnouts along the park road, but the plan that was finalized two months later listed just 19 signs in 14 locations.⁵⁸ The park’s interpretive plan was then presented to regional officials, and after some lively debates on “what roadside interpretive signs for Mount McKinley should be” (and some strident protests from conservationists who argued that signs ruined the “charm of the road”), final designs in 1959 were sent on to the Yosemite National Park, where the agency’s sign shop produced them.⁵⁹ The following July, the park installed its first eight roadside markers. That fall, the sign-installation effort received a severe if unexpected setback; as a government report noted, “many of our wooden signs were destroyed by grizzlies ... prior to the hibernation period, and had to be replaced.” Improved signs arrived in their stead, however, and in July 1962 the last four roadside signs were

This Mission 66 roadside interpretive sign was located west of the Toklat River bridge, overlooking the West Branch of the Toklat River and Divide Mountain. DENA 39-11, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

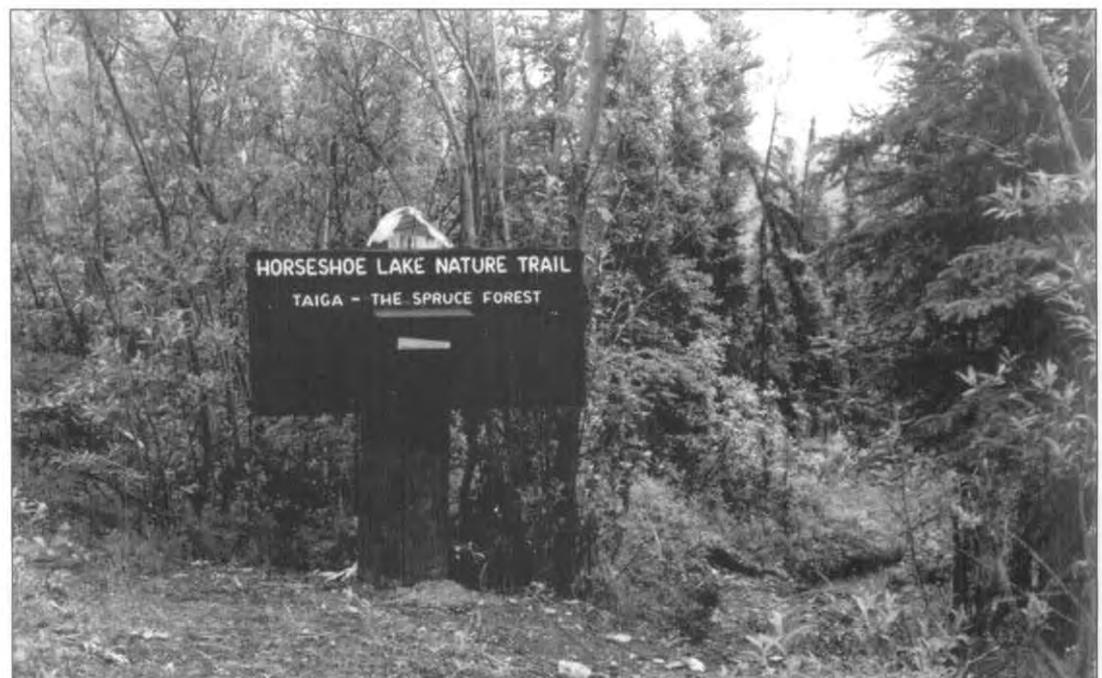


installed.⁶⁰ All proved informative to park visitors, and the only sign that smacked of controversy was one (at Mile 4) discussing permafrost impacts; in June 1963, for reasons of propriety, the park decided to cover over a sign describing a “drunken forest” with the more appropriately-worded “leaning forest.” That overlay, however, proved temporary, and by the 1970s the original text was visible once again.⁶¹

Other signs were added, too. Mileage markers were in place by the summer of 1960, and

perhaps as early as 1956. In 1961, new 4” x 4” redwood markers were installed with numbers on both sides, but by the summer of 1963, only those deemed “very important” were being replaced. Several new mileposts were installed in 1972, but most if not all of the park’s mileposts had been removed by the end of that decade.⁶² New signs also appeared at the two park entrances, the railroad station, the entrance station, the various park campgrounds, and even along Windy Creek, near Cantwell.⁶³ And regarding the Horseshoe Lake Trail near the park hotel, park staff in early

In June 1960, the Horseshoe Lake Nature Trail featured this sign that provided visitors with an interpretive trail guide. DENA 13-6, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



1963 made an about-face from their decade-old practice of distributing self-guided interpretive booklets and instead opted to place 25 or more plastic signposts identifying key features along the trail. These signs were installed over the course of the 1964 and 1965 seasons.⁶⁴

Meanwhile, park staff—facing a dramatic increase in visitor numbers—did their best to carve out an interpretive program that would appeal to a newly-diverse visitor population. During the early summer of 1957, the program was much as it had been earlier: lectures at the park hotel, talks at the park’s museum (or “exhibit room”), dog sled demonstrations, and occasional hotel-based guided nature walks, primarily to Horseshoe Lake.⁶⁵ Later that summer the number of visitors abruptly increased, but given no changes in staff, the program continued much as before. Both then and in 1958, the only new program element was an occasional campground program at Savage Campground, and because the park museum had been chosen as the new information center for auto-borne tourists, the former museum talks became orientation talks.⁶⁶

This period also witnessed the birth of the park’s—and Alaska’s—first park cooperating association. As noted above, park staff in 1947 had begun selling a few educational materials, primarily books and maps. Through most of the 1950s, what was available to tourists was limited to the park brochure, plus two internally-gener-

ated, mimeographed publications: the Horseshoe Lake nature trail booklet and a seven-page road guide entitled *McKinley’s Mammals and Where to Watch for Them*.⁶⁷ Park staff also spent considerable time during the mid- to late 1950s preparing a natural history handbook, but it was never completed.⁶⁸ To provide a vehicle for providing sales items to park tourists, park naturalist William Nancarrow, in late 1951, moved to form a natural history association for the park.⁶⁹ Two years later, he formed the McKinley Park Natural History Association and submitted paperwork to higher-ups for their approval.⁷⁰ That effort proved stillborn, but five years later park staff tried again, and on February 16, 1959 they successfully formed the Mount McKinley Natural History Association, the agency’s 49th cooperating association. Jim Reid, the park naturalist, was the group’s first executive secretary.⁷¹ Of enormous help to the group’s prospects was a \$7,500 pledge, received in the summer of 1959, which had been included in the will of James William Walsh, Jr. Given that financial boost, park officials confidently predicted that the association would “be able to stand on its own feet.”⁷² Park employees were pleasantly flabbergasted by the promised gift—plus a second pledge of an even larger amount—because they had virtually no idea who Walsh was or why he would bequeath such a substantial sum.⁷³

Slowly, over the next few years, new seasonal ranger-naturalists were added (there were two



Additional interpretive staff were hired to operate the new Eielson Visitor Center. Pictured here is the inside of the main viewing room at the visitor center, with exhibits and large windows for observation. DENA 11613, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

Eielson Visitor Center was the destination for concessioner tour buses until June 1981. DENA 5-35, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



in 1959 and 1960, three in 1961, and a surprising five in 1963), and as a result, the park was able to expand its interpretive program. The addition of a park entrance station, in 1959, provided a basis for providing park information⁷⁴; another new service that year was the implementation of roving interpretive patrols along the park road. The interpretive-patrol idea was discarded in 1960. In mid-July of that year the new Eielson Visitor Center opened; it was staffed by a single seasonal ranger—Val Furlong—for the remainder of that season. The new center was devoid of exhibits that summer; perhaps to compensate, Furlong apparently conducted a number of area hikes in addition to his visitor center duties. Beginning in 1961, the agency offered a full-fledged interpretive program which included walks, talks, and information-desk services.⁷⁵

As noted in Chapter 7, the park concessions program in 1958 emerged from an extended period in the doldrums when the Mount McKinley National Park Company—represented by Don Hummel and his nephew, Al Donau—became the park concessioner. By this time, Alaska Railroad schedules had been modified so as to bring visitors to McKinley Park Station during the midday hours. So as a result, those interested in heading out into the park were obliged to arise early, because the concessioner's bus tour left the park hotel at 4 a.m. The daily bus went just 65 miles out the park road (to the former site of Camp Eielson, where construction work was beginning for the new Eielson Visitor Center) and lasted just eight hours in order to have visitors back to the hotel in time for the southbound train. The sleepy bus passengers were assured that the early-morning departure was advantageous

because “the best views of Mount McKinley ... are obtained in the early morning hours some distance from the hotel. Later in the day the peak is often hidden by clouds.”⁷⁶

Interpretation During the 1960s

At the east end of the park, the increasing number of annual park visitors during the 1960s caused growing pains in the interpretive program. At the hotel, evening programs (either slide shows or movies) had long been held in the facility's recreation room. But by June 1961, an average of 50 people—and sometimes crowds of “well over 100”—caused Verde Watson, the new park naturalist, to sarcastically complain that “extreme effort would be required to design a room less appropriate for [audio-visual programs] than the Hotel Recreation Room. ... Protection from inclement weather and insects are about the only good things that can be said” for it. Watson doubtless knew that the park's current master plan, which was a product of the Mission 66 planning process, called for the construction of a visitor center in the hotel area, and that Jim Reid, his predecessor, had been pressing the agency throughout 1960 to build such a center. Given that recommendation, Watson averred that “the need for a visitor center, probably at a location quite near the hotel ... indeed seems urgent.”⁷⁷

The hotel management was sympathetic to the overcrowding and the need for additional interpretive space, so during the winter of 1961-62 the concessioner approved an NPS plan to establish a visitor “information orientation station” in the hotel lobby. The information desk began operations in late May 1962—it was the third such facility opened since 1958—and by the end of June the



This room, added to one side of the hotel porch, served as the NPS visitor information and orientation center beginning in the spring of 1966. DENA 5-40, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

agency was glad to report that “responses thus far to the [new service desk] indicates this facility will render valuable public service.”⁷⁸ In addition, concessions officials agreed to Watson’s plan to provide an afternoon interpretive talk (with an accompanying movie) in the hotel’s recreation room as well as an evening slide-show program. This new system was implemented beginning in July 1962 and soon became a staple of the park’s interpretive program.⁷⁹ And in the fall of 1962, park personnel “temporarily” moved two small buildings to a site adjacent to the existing entrance station (which was located just east of where the road crossed the railway tracks) “to better serve those visitors entering the park by private vehicle.”⁸⁰

These improvements, though helpful in the short term, did not dissuade Watson from pressing for a new visitor center. By the summer of 1962, officials had completed a site-selection process and had chosen to locate the visitor center approximately 100 yards southwest of the hotel, and in 1963 regional officials visited the park and reviewed design plans. For the next two years, Watson continued to advocate for the center.⁸¹ The agency, however, took a more economical alternative; in the spring of 1966, with the concessioner’s blessing, the agency built a new information and orientation center (a 10’ x 15’ room) on the hotel’s front porch. It opened on May 29, and in July the agency noted that the

center had “increased public contact there more than fourfold since the facility was relocated.”⁸²

The enlarged facility was admittedly a stopgap measure; although it adequately fulfilled its narrow purpose, it did nothing to quiet the increasing number of complaints related to the various audio-visual presentations. As noted in the park naturalist’s 1966 annual report,

There is no adequate space in which visitors can assemble for proper orientation to the park. A visitor center with exhibit space and an auditorium is needed. Such a facility is programmed for [fiscal year] 1970. In the interim, the hotel recreation hall must double as auditorium. During the 1966 season 140 persons stood and sat beside pingpong tables and beneath steam and water pipes to listen to interpretive talks designed to recreate indoors the moods of this wilderness park. Quite a trick! Especially when the juke box in the next room blared the erotic music of the period.⁸³

For the remainder of the decade, park staff continued to rail against the “critical shortage of ... visitor use facilities” and plead for a new visitor center. No such action was forthcoming, however.⁸⁴

The park's sled dog demonstration continued to draw visitors to the kennels, seen in this July 1966 photo. DENA 11-116, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



Throughout this period, visitors who arrived at the park by train—and more than half of all park visitors did so—used the concessioner's buses to head west from the hotel and headquarters areas. As noted above, beginning in 1958 an 8-hour bus tour left the park hotel at 4 a.m.; it returned in time for the 12:30 p.m. southbound train. Just one year later, the concessioner added a second

activity: a 12-hour tour (by van) to Wonder Lake, which returned in time for the 4:30 p.m. northbound train.⁸⁵ The longer tour, however, was less well known, and in both 1968 and 1971 advertisements touted only the 8-hour tour. (By 1971, this was being advertised as a “wildlife tour.”) Those who wanted more personalized services—photographers, for example, or those headed off on a

Ranger naturalist Louis Ansorge leads visitors on a Horseshoe Lake Nature Trail walk in August 1965. DENA 13-17, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



backcountry hike—could rent a car, with driver, at the park hotel.⁸⁶

The mid-1960s featured much the same interpretive program that had been established in 1962. At the east end of the park, the program continued to be comprised of dog sled demonstrations, evening slide programs, nature hikes (either to Horseshoe Lake or over the 1.7-mile Morino Loop trail), and afternoon programs. As late as 1966 the typical afternoon interpretive fare was a wildlife movie,⁸⁷ that fall, however, a new NPS-sponsored Alaska film entitled *Magnificence in Trust* was received so positively that it became the afternoon staple the following year. Complementing these programs were ranger talks at Eielson Visitor Center, and on a more sporadic basis, Eielson-based rangers led “tundra wildflower walks” in the area. Visitors, at times, were also able to watch a slide show at the park’s entrance station.⁸⁸

During this period, the fledgling Mount McKinley Natural History Association gained a solid footing, though not without some difficult growing pains. During the early 1960s, the park naturalist—who served as the association’s executive secretary as a collateral duty—was preoccupied in appointing a board of directors and assembling a list of sales items. In its articles of incorporation, the association was intended to serve park units throughout Alaska; given that direction, a sales unit opened at Sitka soon after the group was formed (though its sales were limited to slides). Similar sales units at Glacier

Bay and Katmai did not open until 1968 and 1971, respectively; even so, staff from all three monuments served as board members throughout the 1960s. The difficulties of holding an annual meeting with such far-flung members, however, soon became apparent, and in 1962 the board agreed that McKinley-based staff could constitute a quorum.⁸⁹

Of obvious concern to the new natural history association was where the park’s sales venue would be located and what items would be sold. At first, annual sales were small because the major sales outlet was in the small park entrance station. (Eielson Visitor Center, which opened in 1960, sold only a small number of items during the 1960s.⁹⁰) Then, in 1962, prospects for the association’s finances brightened considerably with the installation of a new publications display case at the newly-staffed information desk in the park hotel. (This natural history association sales area would remain until the summer of 1972, when it moved to the new Riley Creek Information Center.) The installation of two small exhibit buildings near the park entrance station, during the winter of 1962-63, provided an improved sales outlet to visitors arriving by automobile.⁹¹

As far as its sales items were concerned, the association first retailed existing books, maps, and film. But as Regional Naturalist Dorr Yeager noted, “the publication of information material ... frequently constitutes the greatest source of income for [park] association[s].”⁹² Longtime park biologist Adolph Murie graciously agreed



Ranger naturalist John Trent, seen here, gave the first interpretive campground program at the Savage River Campground on July 6, 1968. DENA 13-23, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

to publish his *Mammals of Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska* through the association, and not long afterward he agreed to do likewise for his *Birds of Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska*. (His idea for a park “flower book” was considered but never published.)⁹³ These two publications were offered for sale at the park beginning in May and July 1963, respectively. During the early 1960s, revenues from book sales at the park were relatively modest, never exceeding \$2,700 per year. Association profits, moreover, were minimal because “a large number of the association’s two publications were given away” to colleges and secondary schools.⁹⁴

Later that decade, the association branched out with assistance to other park units: in 1964 it published a visitors’ guide to Sitka National Monument plus a *Glacier Bay National Monument Boating Guide*. Then, in December 1966, it purchased the nine-acre site where the old Dundas Bay cannery was located (in Glacier Bay National Monument), after which it donated the parcel to the NPS. In May 1967 it helped underwrite the construction of a scale model of Sitka (circa 1867) to help commemorate the Alaska Purchase centennial. Then, in 1968, it published a staff-prepared *A Coloring Book of Mount McKinley*.⁹⁵ In recognition of the association’s statewide reach—and to also recognize the newly-independent management status of Glacier Bay and Katmai national monuments—the Mount McKinley Natural History Association changed its name, in 1970, to the Alaska National Parks and Monuments Association.⁹⁶

During the last four years before the Parks Highway was completed to the park, a new activity was added to the park’s interpretive program. In 1969, “rustic campfire circles” were placed at Savage River, Wonder Lake, and Teklanika campgrounds, and evening campfire talks commenced in 1970. The long-existing activities remained, but because of the burgeoning crowds coming to the park, their frequency multiplied: beginning in 1969, for example, there were two dog-sled demonstrations daily, and the summers of 1970 and 1971 often witnessed two showings of the afternoon movie (*Magnificence in Trust*), two nature hikes, and even two evening programs each day.⁹⁷

The Impact of Traffic Restrictions on Park Interpretation

As noted in Chapter 8, the completion of the Parks Highway resulted in NPS Director George Hartzog’s decision to ration traffic along the park road west of the Savage River campground. As a result of that decision, private automobile traffic along most of the park road was restricted, and

to provide access into the park the NPS implemented a shuttle bus system beginning in early June 1972. The establishment of this system generated a huge demand for information about travel options. And because most of this demand was generated by automobile travelers, the NPS reacted by opening the Riley Creek Information Center, later that summer, near the entrance to Riley Creek Campground. That same year, they removed the information center at the hotel.⁹⁸ The other major implication of the new system was that the many roadside interpretive signs that had informed the motoring public were no longer needed. As a result, NPS staff quietly began to take down these signs. Some were gone just a few months after Director Hartzog announced the new traffic regime; a few signs, however, remained until the late 1970s.⁹⁹

Given the road restrictions, people interested in visiting the western end of the park road had two options: the long-established tour buses or the new shuttle buses. The concessioner initially reacted to the new system by moving the former 4 a.m. buses to an even earlier 3 a.m. starting time. But by mid-July, it had made an about-face and moved the departure time back to 6 a.m. and, in addition, it added an evening wildlife tour. (Both tours went 66 miles out the road before returning; the new tour was ostensibly added “as a means to alleviate congestion caused by large visitor groups at Eielson Visitor Center.”) The evening tour, however, proved unsuccessful, so in the spring of 1973 the concessioner offered two morning tours, at 4 a.m. and 6 a.m.¹⁰⁰ Twice-a-day tours remained the norm for the remainder of the decade; in 1977 the early tour still departed at 4 a.m., but by 1980, tour times were 6 a.m. and mid-afternoon.¹⁰¹ As for the shuttle bus, it proved almost three times as popular as the tour bus during the summer of 1972.¹⁰² Despite overcrowding problems that forced the NPS to acquire additional buses in midseason that year, the agency in the spring of 1973 advertised that there would be just five daily round trips to the western reaches of the park road: two to Wonder Lake and three others to Eielson. As the decade wore on, the number of these daily round trips increased.¹⁰³

The mid- to late 1970s witnessed dramatically increasing visitor volumes to Mount McKinley National Park: there were fewer than 45,000 recreational visitors in 1971, the year before the Parks Highway reached the park, but by 1979, that number had skyrocketed to more than 251,000 recreational visitors.¹⁰⁴ During this period, the number of visitors who arrived by train increased slightly. The vast majority of new visitors, however, were those who drove to the park; rather than taking the long, difficult Denali Highway route,



Road traffic restrictions meant that all visitors—not just tour bus passengers—would travel the park road in larger groups, resulting in the need for expanded services. These two photographs were taken at Polychrome Rest Stop in July 1974, only two years after road travel restrictions were instituted. DENA 5745, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



Polychrome Rest stop facilities are shown here in 2007. NPS Photo

most motorists accessed the park via the Parks Highway, from either Fairbanks or Anchorage.

In order to provide quality information to the new hordes of park visitors, park staff sought new interpretive opportunities. As noted above, the 1971 program had featured the following daily activities: two afternoon movies, two evening programs, two dog sled demonstrations, two hotel-based nature hikes, and various campground talks. By 1975, the afternoon movie had been eliminated entirely, and both the hotel slide show (which was now held in the afternoon) and the hotel-based nature walk had been trimmed back to once per day.¹⁰⁵ Campfire programs were being offered at the Wonder Lake and Teklanika campgrounds (as in 1971), but the Savage Campground program had been cut in favor of one at

the much larger Riley Creek Campground. Dog sled demonstrations increased from twice- to thrice-daily (at 10 a.m., 2 p.m., and 3 p.m.) beginning in August 1975. (Park staff noted that “this demonstration of the traditional use of sled dogs in Alaska and Mount McKinley continues to be the favorite and most highly attended visitor activity.”) In addition, interpreters now offered a “tundra walk” each afternoon at Eielson Visitor Center along with a longer daily discovery hike which had been instituted in 1973.¹⁰⁶ Interpreters also were on hand twice each day at the McKinley Park railroad depot to offer information and guidance to arriving visitors. In 1976, the program was similar to what had been offered in 1975, except that it reestablished its hotel-based evening program four days each week, and on the other three days it inaugurated an evening walk



A ranger naturalist provides visitors with an interpretive talk in the Eielson Visitor Center observation room, July 1966. DENA 13-20, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



starting at the hotel. In addition, Eielson-based tundra walks were offered in the morning as well as afternoon, and “bicentennial living history demonstrations” were offered at the “Historic Toklat Cabin” throughout the summer.¹⁰⁷

By 1978, the park’s interpretive program had witnessed even more changes. The daily afternoon slide talks and the four-per-week evening slide shows remained, as did the daily hotel-based nature walks and the three-per-day dog sled demonstrations. But Eielson-based tundra walks were now offered three times per day, and discovery hikes were now offered to both hotel-area and Eielson-based visitors. Campfire programs were offered at four campgrounds: Riley Creek, Savage, Teklanika, and Wonder Lake. In addition, children’s activities were now offered daily at the Riley Creek Information Center, and interpretive programs were occasionally offered at McKinley Village, seven miles south of the hotel. (Rangers no longer greeted arriving train passengers.) In 1979, the agency was able to expand its slide-show programs to twice each day, seven days per week, and offsite programs were shifted from McKinley Village to Camp Denali and North Face Lodge. Otherwise, park interpretation continued much as it had the previous year.¹⁰⁸

The dramatic increases in park visitation, and the limited, inadequate facilities at the park hotel, soon brought forth renewed calls for improved interpretive venues at both ends of the park road.

Just two years after Eielson Visitor Center was opened to the public, large groups of visitors were overwhelming the facility; in particular, lunch-toting tour bus patrons descended on the center at mid-morning each day, and given the cool, blustery conditions that all too often prevail there, patrons commonly ate their box lunches in the center’s main exhibit room, a practice that the NPS felt was “highly inappropriate.”¹⁰⁹ By 1966 the situation was unchanged, as noted in this annual report:

Eielson Visitor Center, in reality only a wayside museum, ... was frequently overcrowded. Eielson contains an exhibit-observation room with information desk, restrooms, and a multipurpose room used only as a lunchroom since its construction in 1961. ... The tiny room, into which about 20 persons would cram, is inadequate since busses disgorge upwards of 100 passengers at a time. Visitors overflowed into the observation room. ... As long as Eielson remains the terminus of the bus tours, overcrowding and overtaxing of facilities will be fact of life and the object of complaints.¹¹⁰

These conditions remained until 1972, when the establishment of the park shuttle bus system, plus ever-increasing visitor numbers, resulted in enormous new demands on the decade-old visitor center. By 1973, the agency finally de-

Groups of tour bus passengers routinely ate their sack lunches in the observation room of the Eielson Visitor Center, as this 1961 photograph shows. DENA 42-25, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



cided that the building needed to be redesigned and enlarged (see Chapter 8); plans called for additional restroom facilities, a new entryway, covered walkways, and a large, open observation tower that offered sweeping views (on clear days) of Mt. McKinley and other Alaska Range peaks. Bids were let in April 1974 and project construction began later that year. The work was largely completed by September 1975. A year later, new exhibits were installed there.¹¹¹ The expanded facilities, plus the concessioner's 1972 decision to offer more than one wildlife tour, eased the overcrowding problem at Eielson, although space concerns remained for years afterward.

At the east end of the park road, new calls were made for a park visitor center. The park's decision to schedule afternoon as well as evening programs—began in July 1962—had helped, as had the construction of an NPS information center in the hotel (a small area in 1962, then moved and expanded in 1966). The 1972 opening of the Riley Creek Information Center—which was a double-wide trailer near the campground entrance—provided an even larger area where agency personnel could dispense information and interpretive materials. But by the late 1970s, crowds attending programs at the park hotel (a “temporary” structure built to replace the hotel that had burned in September 1972) were again exceeding the capacity of existing facilities.

In 1979, the NPS moved to improve its interpretive facilities. That April, it proposed that the existing information center—which was a single open room—be replaced with a larger, rustic-appearing log information station “capable of housing separately the major functions of campground registration, fee collection, Association sales, backcountry permits, and visitor information, plus having space for administrative use where accountability can be accomplished in private.” Alternatively, it urged the construction of a “major visitor center which would contain all of the information station operations plus major exhibit rooms, an auditorium, library, museum, and interpretive office and administrative space.”¹¹²

Inasmuch as the agency, at this time, was in the midst of the Congressional fight over Alaska's parklands, officials were not in a position to expend substantial new funds until after the lands question had been settled. The plans for a new information center, therefore, were held in abeyance for the time being. In 1982, the construction of a new office addition to the “inadequate double wide trailer” provided improved conditions and offered staff a modicum of privacy.¹¹³ But more ambitious proposals remained in the planning stage until the park's Visitor Access Center (now called the Wilderness Access Center) was constructed in the late 1980s. But regarding an expanded venue for park interpretive programs, agency officials as a stopgap measure purchased



By July 1974, construction of additional restroom facilities, a new entryway, covered walkways, and an open observation tower were underway at Eielson Visitor Center. DENA 5749, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

a 40' x 60' red-and-white-striped "circus tent" and erected it just north of the park hotel in time for the 1979 visitor season. This tent, which was ostensibly "rented for the summer," was of marginal benefit; as park naturalist William Truesdell noted, it "allowed too much light to enter and the light that shown [sic] through the red stripes was very distracting. The tent was also uncomfortably cold most of the summer."¹¹⁴ The year 1980 brought even greater discomfort; on June 18 the tent collapsed under a 12-inch snow load. Operations there could not begin again until July 4, and as staff noted, the tent was again "uncomfortably cold," primarily because "of another cold, rainy summer."¹¹⁵

Given the tent's obvious disadvantages, the NPS included a clause in its 1981 concessions agreement that called for the concessioner to build a new "audio visual room" adjacent to the hotel. (See Chapter 9.) This structure, later called an auditorium, was completed by the late summer of 1982 and it opened to the public in June 1983. But between 1979 and 1982, the tent hosted a wide variety of lectures and movies, the latter sponsored by both the NPS and the concessioner.

During the 1970s the Alaska National Parks and Monuments Association took on several new

publications projects, and perhaps as a result, its fortunes increased. As noted above, when the newly-named statewide organization began (in April 1970) it had published three books about the park: Adolph Murie's volumes on mammals and birds (in 1962 and 1963, respectively), and the staff-created *Coloring Book of Mount McKinley*, published in 1968. In 1971 the association published *The Malamutes of Mount McKinley*, by agency employees Roy Sanborn and Tom Ritter, and soon afterward it published a bear warning folder (entitled *Grizzly Bear - Friend or Foe?*) and a new *Horseshoe Lake Trail Guide*. In 1974 it republished Murie's popular mammal book. Throughout this period, the coloring book remained available to park visitors.¹¹⁶ In 1971 the association tallied about \$8,250 in gross receipts at the park, a figure that had roughly doubled by 1975; just a year later, however, revenues shot up to \$45,000 "due to the use of new multi-book display techniques, to maintaining sufficient stock, and the acquiring of slide sets and Kodak film products for sale."¹¹⁷ The 1974-76 expansion of Eielson Visitor Center portended the potential for an increased sales presence, but throughout the late 1970s the association's sales selection was limited to maps, film, and slide sets.¹¹⁸

Revenues for the cooperating organization continued to increase during the late 1970s.

This circus tent, located just north of the hotel, served as a temporary auditorium for interpretive talks. Seasonal interpreters who gave programs there recalled that it was cold and the projection screen would undulate when it was windy. NPS Interp. Collection, #2408, Denali National Park and Preserve



During the 1977 fiscal year they totaled approximately \$62,000, and between 1978 and 1980 they ranged between \$80,000 and \$100,000. Given the group's increasing revenues, it was able to hire its first employee (Wilma Mercer) in 1977. The following year it placed its first salesperson at Eielson Visitor Center, and in 1979 it sponsored the publication of Wyatt G. Gilbert's geology handbook, entitled *A Geologic Guide to Mount McKinley National Park*. By the summer of 1980, the Mount McKinley outlet of the cooperating organization had three sales personnel on its payroll; two worked for the summer season, while the third "worked part-time during the winter to take care of mail orders and deposits."¹¹⁹ A major new element in the park's interpretation program emerged in 1979 with the first edition of a summer park newsletter, called the *Alpenglow*. This eight-page publication, which followed much the same guidelines as similar publications at "Lower 48" parks, proved so successful that it became a regular summer feature. At first, the agency paid all of the newsletter's printing costs; a few years later, however, the park's cooperative association began to assist in this regard.¹²⁰

During the late 1970s, the park's cooperating association dramatically changed its scope due to legislative activity taking place in Washington, D.C. As noted in Chapter 8, Congress spent much of the 1970s debating the Alaska lands issue, and its self-imposed deadline called for the issue to be resolved by December 1978. In anticipation of that deadline, the Alaska National Parks and Monuments Association moved in the late summer of 1978 to change its name to the Alaska Natural History Association (ANHA). Despite a delay in settling the Alaska lands issue, ANHA came into being in late November 1978. Recognizing that Congress, in due course, would pass a lands bill with managers from a variety of federal, state, and other entities, ANHA's directors stated that the new organization's purpose would be to support "the educational and scientific programs of federal and other governmental agencies and non-profit organizations concerned with the conservation, preservation and interpretation of natural, historical, and cultural resources of the state of Alaska."¹²¹

Park Interpretation During the 1980s

In December 1980, Congress passed—and President Carter signed—the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, and among its other provisions was creation of Denali National Park and Preserve in lieu of Mount McKinley National Park and a near-tripling of the park unit's acreage. Despite the millions of acres of new parkland, the vast majority of visitors remained along the road corridor in the so-called "old park." As a result, interpretation did not undergo significant changes because of Congress's action.

A new auditorium, located adjacent to the McKinley Park Hotel, was opened in 1983 and used for the presentation of interpretive audio visual programs. NPS Photo, Brad Richie Collection



Instead, the 1980s witnessed incremental changes based on a continuing explosion in the number of park visits – from approximately 216,000 in 1980 to 436,000 in 1985 and 546,000 in 1990. Interpreters continued to offer the public the same opportunities that had been offered in years past: dog sled demonstrations, hotel-based nature walks, ranger-led talks and films, discovery hikes, campground talks, Eielson-based tundra walks, and children’s activities operating out of the Riley Creek Information Center. Visitors enthusiastically attended these activities, particularly the dog sled demonstrations; total interpretive participation (for all park programs) rose from about 60,000 in 1980 to more than 212,000 in 1991.¹²² To cope with the crowds, several of these activities were offered more often during the 1980s than they had previously. But for the most part, increasing visitation resulted in larger crowds attending the same number of interpretive presentations. (The thrice-daily dog-sled demonstrations, for example, remained constant throughout the decade.) A few new activities were attempted; the agency, for example, experimented with “welcome walks” during the 1987 season, and about 1990, park ranger-naturalists “randomly boarded shuttle buses to provide ‘on board’ commentary and contact with our visitors.” The welcome walks proved short-lived, and after 1989 staff no longer offered daily children’s programs. So-called “bus roves” remained, however, through the mid-1990s.¹²³

The major interpretive facility developed during the 1980s was the Visitor Access Center. As noted



Park interpreters provided visitors with an opportunity for short walks originating from the park hotel. Edible plants of the area was the theme of the interpretive walk shown here. Robyn Burch Collection

in Chapter 9, the stopgap nature of the 1972 Riley Creek Information Center was widely recognized, and despite a 1982 addition, it was widely hoped that this facility could soon be replaced with a larger, more permanent structure. In 1982, the agency had announced plans—as part of its road corridor development concept plan—to build a new “interpretive/transportation center.” This plan was approved in 1983, and the park’s final (November 1986) general management plan reiterated the need for a “visitor access center” and further suggested the addition of an adjacent shuttle bus staging area.¹²⁴ Funding the new center, however, proved problematic, and it was not until early 1987 that the NPS awarded a construction contract. That September the winning bidder, the Ahtna Native Regional Corporation, began site preparation. The new Visitor Access Center (VAC) opened over Memorial Day weekend 1990; as Superintendent Russell Berry noted, the facility was “a vast improvement” over the 18-year-old double-wide that it was replacing.¹²⁵ After that date, the facility served as the primary way in which motorized visitors were introduced to the park and its various transportation, camping, and backcountry options. In addition, the VAC’s auditorium showed a half-hour-long automated orientation slide show.¹²⁶

As noted above, the concessioner’s bus tours underwent major changes during the 1970s, and between 1977 and 1980, the twice-a-day tours moved from morning-only departures to those that left at both 6 a.m. and the mid-afternoon. This schedule continued on into 1981, but a deadly bus accident in mid-June of that year (during the return run of an afternoon bus) just east of Eielson Visitor Center forced the concessioner to rethink its turnaround point. Recognizing that two previous, recent accidents—in July 1974 and August 1978—had also taken place toward the west end of the park road, the concessioner immediately decided to truncate the tour by establishing a new bus turnaround point at Stony Hill. (See Chapter 9.) Since that time, tour buses as a rule have not ventured beyond Stony Hill; indeed, bus passengers visiting the park on cloudy days have typically gone only as far west as the Toklat River.¹²⁷

The twice-daily bus schedule—one in the morning, another in the afternoon—has continued ever since. In recent years the increased popularity of this tour¹²⁸ has exploded, requiring numerous morning departures (between 6:00 and 7:30 a.m.) and additional afternoon departures (between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m.), but the same basic schedule still holds. The shorter Denali Natural History Tour, which began in 1990 (see Chapter 9) keeps to a similar schedule; it also holds

Beginning in 1994, NPS interpretive rangers (in uniform or in costume as historical characters) provided presentations at the historic Savage River Ranger Patrol cabin. This was an opportunity for rangers to interact with passengers on the Denali Natural History Tour, operated by the park concessioner. In 1996 this function was performed by the tour bus drivers, and the following year the park concessioner began training its own staff to provide living history presentations at this venue. Ingrid Nixon Collection



morning and afternoon departure times, plus an additional midday departure.¹²⁹

As noted above, participation in the old Alaska National Parks and Monuments Association had been limited to NPS units, and Mount McKinley National Park had dominated that entity, both financially and organizationally. The new Alaska Natural History Association, however, brought forth a new era of cooperation among both federal and non-federal agencies. Given that cooperative spirit, ANHA invited U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service representatives to participate within months of the new organization's formation; ANHA and the agency signed an agreement in March 1979, and that summer association outlets were in operation both in Adak (Aleutians National Wildlife Refuge) and Fairbanks (Arctic National Wildlife Range). A year later—in fact, less than two weeks before President Carter signed ANILCA into law—U.S. Forest Service and ANHA representatives signed a memorandum of understanding, and in the summer of 1981 Chugach National Forest opened its first two ANHA outlets: at the Begich-Boggs Visitor Center in Portage, and on board the *M/V Bartlett*.¹³⁰ In 1985 a fourth member signed on—Alaska State Parks, where an outlet opened at the Eagle River Visitor Center that July—and in 1991 the U.S. Bureau of Land Management joined as well, with outlets both at the Coldfoot interagency center and the Public Services Room in the new Anchorage federal building.¹³¹

During the early- to mid-1980s, the surge in park visitation resulted in a dramatic increase in

ANHA revenues: from approximately \$97,000 in 1980 to \$126,000 in 1984 and \$211,000 in 1987.¹³² (Part of this increase was brought about by the addition of books to the stock at Eielson, although in the late 1980s the outlet's offerings were still fairly limited.¹³³) But given the more diverse function of the Alaska Natural History Association during this period, the economic dominance of the park in ANHA soon waned; in 1980, sales at the park outlet had comprised more than 60 percent of ANHA's total sales (and ANHA's executive director noted that "Mt. McKinley's sales have always been the backbone of the association's income"), but in 1984 and 1987, however, they had fallen to 43 percent and 27 percent, respectively.¹³⁴ The park, during this period, initially had two sales outlets: Riley Creek Information Center and Eielson Visitor Center. But ANHA personnel, sensing a business opportunity, sponsored the publication (in June 1981) of dog handler Sandy Kogl's *Sled Dogs of Denali* and then sold the book after the park's daily dog sled demonstrations.¹³⁵ During the 1980s the local ANHA branch sponsored the production of several other new items, including Kim Heacox's 1986 *Denali Road Guide*, Michael Collier's *Geology of Denali National Park* (1989), and a poster by Washington-based artist Jim Hays. ANHA revenues were also used to produce the annual *Alpenglow* and to assist the financially beleaguered park interpretive program.¹³⁶

Park Interpretation, 1991-present

Beginning in 1990, Denali National Park and Preserve offered three primary interpretive venues. The Visitor Access Center was a focal

The Alaska Natural History Association (ANHA) sales outlet at the park dog kennels is shown on the right of this photo. At the end of the scheduled sled dog demonstration, as visitors make their way back to waiting buses, ANHA staff provided an opportunity for visitors to purchase park literature. NPS Kennels Photo



point for those who drove to the park or were potential shuttle-bus passengers; visitors to the center could obtain bus reservations and tickets, board the buses, and get both backcountry camping reservations and park campground permits. In addition, the center's auditorium showed an automated, introductory slide show, later complemented by various videos that the local Alaska Natural History Association offered as sales items. The separate auditorium building, located just north of the park hotel, offered narrated slide shows, and it also continued to show the park's award-winning film, *Denali Wilderness*, which had been completed in 1982 and first shown in 1983. (This film was shown to visitors until 1997.)¹³⁷ And the Eielson Visitor Center, 66 miles out the park road, offered exhibits. The hotel and Eielson served as the base for nature walks, and all three venues had staff to answer visitor inquiries and sell park-related books.¹³⁸ This trichotomy remained for the next 12 years.

As noted earlier, the number of park visitors grew sharply throughout the 1970s and 1980s. (Specifically, approximate annual recreational visitation was 45,000 in 1971, it rose to 216,000 in 1980, and beginning in 1986, it topped 500,000 and remained at that level through the early 1990s.) But as noted in Chapter 10, the political implications of the park's visitation level brought about changes to the tabulation methodology, and as a consequence the agency recorded fewer annual recreational visitors. More specifically, U.S. Senator Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska) in 1995 compared the 500,000-plus annual visitation figure with the annual number of bus passengers

(which totaled approximately 250,000) and concluded that more than 250,000 people "were not able to enter the park" because the buses were full. Murkowski, moreover, used that figure to justify the need for a northern access route to the Kantishna-Wonder Lake area.¹³⁹ Faced with that political reality, the NPS's statistics unit (based at the agency's Denver Service Center) changed its visitor counting method from one that counted total vehicle traffic heading up the park road (i.e., number of *visits*, including casual local traffic) to one that more accurately reflected the actual number of park *visitors*. Given that change in counting methods, recreational park visitation slipped from 543,309 in 1995 to 341,395 in 1996 (a 37 per cent drop), even though there was only a slight dip in the actual number of recreational visitors.¹⁴⁰

In 2001, changes to the park's interpretive program once again took place when the McKinley Park Hotel closed down. That closure, followed soon afterward by the hotel's demolition, engendered a four-year transitional period in which the Visitor Access Center was the park's only significant east-end interpretive venue. (See Chapter 10.) As noted elsewhere, park staff had been calling for a full-fledged visitor center in this area ever since the Mission 66 days of the mid-1950s, and the 1990 completion of the Visitor Access Center—while a positive step—did not mitigate the need for a new interpretive venue that could offer exhibit space and a quiet, state-of-the-art auditorium for talks and films. The need for this facility had been stated in the so-called Front Country Development Concept Plan, which the

NPS had approved in February 1997; despite the completion of that plan, however, hotel operations continued until Congress was able to underwrite the cost of new NPS facilities and, on a more practical level, until the termination of the concessioner's twenty-year contract.

Because the Visitor Access Center, during this period, was the park's primary visitor node, there was a widespread assumption (based on the 1997 DCP) that any new visitor services facilities would be located adjacent to the VAC. This assumption, however, was dispelled in November 2001 when the NPS released an environmental assessment (EA) for its planned visitor facilities. This EA proposed the construction of a multi-use "visitor services building," along with an adjacent science and learning center, which would be located on or near the footprint of the old hotel. NPS officials, in this plan, decided to locate new visitor services here, rather than the VAC site, because it was adjacent to the railroad station and because the new site protected park resources and animal habitat by using "pre-disturbed land."¹⁴¹ This proposal was somewhat modified during the ensuing public process, but the final EA, approved at the end of January 2002, called for a 14,500-square-foot visitor center along with several adjacent support buildings and a new Denali Science and Learning Center.¹⁴²

By the end of 2003, the agency had chosen a builder for both the visitor center and the learning center, and work was "underway and on schedule" on both complexes. The educational center, by now called the Murie Science and Learning Center, opened in August 2004.¹⁴³

During the winter of 2004-05, construction crews and interpretive specialists completed their work on the three-building complex that included the Denali Visitor Center, the Denali Bookstore, and the Morino Grill. The visitor center complex opened to the public in May 2005, and three months later NPS officials held dedication ceremonies there.¹⁴⁴ As soon as the visitor center opened, the role of the 15-year-old VAC changed significantly. The park concessioner took over its management from the NPS, the center's name changed to the Wilderness Access Center, and backpacking permitting functions (which the NPS still managed) moved out to an adjacent trailer. The main park film, the newly-minted (and award-winning) *Heartbeats of Denali* was now being shown in the new visitor center, so in its stead was featured the recently-released historical film, *Across Time and Tundra*, which had been produced in 2002 by park employees Jane Bryant and Jane Tranel.¹⁴⁵

Another new facility erected during this period was located in Talkeetna, south and east of the newly-expanded park. In order to manage the ever-increasing number of Alaska Range climbers, the NPS since 1977 had stationed staff at Talkeetna during the three-month climbing season. (See Chapter 13.) Staff first operated out of makeshift facilities, and visitors were hardly aware of the NPS's presence in town. But in 1984 the agency began renting a small, rough-hewn building just south of the Fairview Hotel; it was dubbed the "Genet Building" because the late mountaineer Ray Genet had helped erect it. Though the building was primarily intended



Park interpretive rangers continue to present regularly-scheduled campground evening talks. The theme of the Wonder Lake Campground presentation pictured above is mountaineering history. NPS Photo

as a climbers' orientation station, non-climbing visitors soon began to filter in. Agency personnel displayed minimal interpretive materials: large-scale photographs, mountaineering gear, a small outside kiosk, and similar items. To help answer visitors' questions, the agency began stationing Student Conservation Association personnel in the facility. The Genet Building, rustic in appearance and poorly constructed, retained its function until well into the 1990s.¹⁴⁶ But the increasing interest in Talkeetna as a visitor destination, as well as a continuing rise in the number of annual climbers, portended the need for a larger, multipurpose facility, and in 1989 agency officials began designing exhibits for a new facility that would be located in "downtown Talkeetna to serve the separate and specific function of providing assistance to Mt. McKinley climbers."¹⁴⁷ That facility was begun in 1995, completed in December 1996, and dedicated in June 1997 (see Chapter 13). The Talkeetna Mountaineering Center, known more informally as the Talkeetna Ranger Station, was "highlighted with several large panoramic photographs by Mt. McKinley's revered master, Bradford Washburn," and beginning in 1997 seasonal interpreters began working there to cater to the needs of non-climbing visitors.¹⁴⁸

Although the number of park employees—both permanent and seasonal—has grown substantially since ANILCA's passage, the number of interpretive personnel has not kept pace with that growth. All too often, times of fiscal stress have tended to impact the interpretive workforce to a disproportionate degree.¹⁴⁹ As a result,

interpretation in both the East District and West District of the park has been handled by seasonal NPS employees since 1980, if not earlier.¹⁵⁰ But even seasonal hires (some of whom have been local residents) have been reduced in recent years, and in 2004 the park had its smallest number of interpretive seasonals in twenty years. In order to fulfill the park's goals, park staff increasingly relied on Youth Conservation Corps workers, Visitor Use Assistants, members of the Student Conservation Association, and on volunteers, some of whom were seasonal workers who stayed on for the winter.¹⁵¹ Indeed, volunteers have made major contributions in recent years; by the late 1990s, volunteer interpreters were contributing more than 2,000 hours of service each year, and the latest (2006) figures state that interpretive volunteers contributed more than 8,000 hours: almost four full-time years of volunteer effort.¹⁵² Interpretive leaders during the post-ANILCA period have included William Truesdell (1975-1981), Doug Cuillard (1982-1987), George Wagner (1987-1991), Thea Nordling (1992-1996), Lisa Eckert (1996-1998), Blanca Stransky (1999-2006), and Ingrid Nixon (2006 to present).¹⁵³

During this period, NPS officials continued to improve the interpretive program and to expand it where appropriate. In 1992, for example, the auditorium at the hotel offered both an afternoon and evening program (either a slide show or movie in each case). There was also a daily "naturalist's choice program" (which might include anything from a nature hike to a demonstration or children's program) held either in the VAC or hotel area. Discovery hikes were of-



Talkeetna-based interpretive rangers present informational talks to visitors and school groups, shown here in the main room of the Talkeetna Ranger Station. NPS Photo

Discovery hikes led by interpretive rangers typically last from three to five hours. Visitors ride shuttle buses to the beginning of the scheduled hikes. NPS Photo



ferred; campground programs were given at Riley Creek, Savage River, Teklanika, and Wonder Lake campgrounds; dog sled demonstrations were still provided three times each day; and at Eielson Visitor Center, both tundra walks and “naturalist’s choice” activities were offered each day.¹⁵⁴ In 1994, NPS staff initiated historical programs at the old ARC-built Savage Cabin, and a year later, park staff began offering additional programs including “streambed strolls,” “Toklat Treks,” and morning kennels-area walks.¹⁵⁵ In 1998, staff inaugurated a “naturalist’s choice evening walk” three times each week, and four years later it initiated the “Denali discovery pack program,” intended for families, in which a backpack contained “an activity guide, tools and materials to explore park resources and bring visitors closer to the small wonders of the natural world.”¹⁵⁶ Throughout this period the agency, as noted above, showed an orientation slide show many times each day at the Visitor Access Center. It also offered Junior Ranger Program activities, initially through offerings in the annual *Denali Alpenglow* newsletter and later through an activity guide available free from park staff.¹⁵⁷

Since 2000, the program has continued to evolve. During the summer of 2003, daily programs included dog sled demonstrations (still offered three times each day), an evening program in the VAC’s theatre, evening programs at four of the park’s campgrounds, a Horseshoe Lake hike, a Savage River walk, an “Eielson Stroll,” and a discovery hike. By 2006 these had been modified somewhat because the VAC (now the Wilderness Access Center) was no longer the only NPS visi-

tor node and because Eielson Visitor Center was being replaced (see below). The VAC’s evening program and the “Eielson Stroll” were thus eliminated, and as well, the Savage hikes were replaced by the more generic “entrance area hikes and strolls” and a variety of either “short loops in the spruce forest” or “longer explorations that interpret various park-related themes.”¹⁵⁸ All indications suggest that the park’s interpretive staff will continue to experiment with new interpretive programs, and they will either add new programs or replace existing programs in response to changing budgets and emerging public interests.

The park’s cooperating association has shown strong growth in recent years. During the 1980s, as noted above, the Alaska Natural History Association had two sales outlets: the double-wide Riley Creek Information Center and Eielson Visitor Center. In the spring of 1990, the completion of the new Visitor Access Center (with a large, modern sales outlet) replaced the old information center, and in 1995, the Joe Hankins Room at the Eielson Visitor Center was reconfigured into a larger, up-to-date ANHA sales area.¹⁵⁹ As a result of those initiatives, ANHA sales at the park dramatically increased from 1989 (with \$226,000 in sales) to 1995 (with \$679,000 in sales). More recent figures have shown even higher returns; between 1998 and 2004 the park’s outlets consistently grossed between \$825,000 and \$975,000 in sales.¹⁶⁰ In the spring of 2005, the opening of the new park visitor center included the adjacent Denali Bookstore. Given that new facility, the park’s ANHA outlet had its first million-dollar sales year in 2005, with \$1,082,000 in gross

To enhance the visitor experience and to provide for the safety of increasing numbers of visitors, viewing stands (seen above) were installed at the kennels in 1998. In 2003, a total of 38,651 visitors attended dog demonstrations at the park kennels. NPS Photo



sales. In 2006 sales shot up even further, to some \$1,465,000 (see Figure 2).

A key aspect of public-agency cooperating associations is that a significant percentage of gross revenues are returned to the agencies, with the money received being used to further various agency interpretive and educational goals. As noted above, so-called “branch support” or “direct aid” revenues gathered during the earliest years of the park’s cooperating association were devoted toward the publication of various park books, followed in later years by posters, newsletters, and similar interpretive fare. Prior to 1975, these revenues were fairly meager. But in 1977, as noted above, they were sufficient to sponsor the park’s first staff person, and during the 1980s the funds paid back to the park multiplied tenfold. Throughout the 1990s, these funds consistently topped \$30,000 per year, and since 2000 they have often exceeded \$60,000 annually.¹⁶¹

Given such a substantial, continuing revenue stream, ANHA officials in recent years have been able to engage in diverse projects to “facilitate the conservation, education, and interpretive programs” at Denali National Park and Preserve.¹⁶² During the 1990s the association’s primary efforts were aimed at discrete physical products: the publication of various books and the annual *Alpenglow* newsletter, along with an art print, a video highlighting winter patrol activities, and a CD-ROM about the park.¹⁶³ But funds also were directed to such diverse goals as VAC exhibits, library books, interpretive materials, and the con-

struction of a climbers’ memorial, and as early as 1996 direct-aid revenues were able to pay for Student Conservation Association interpretive interns.¹⁶⁴ After 2000, the scope of these activities was able to increase. By 2002, the association was able to shore up the park’s underfunded interpretive division by hiring an interpretive planner along with four interns; it funded both summer and winter issues of the *Alpenglow*; it distributed 170,000 “companion booklets” (i.e., interpretive guides) to patrons on both the Tundra Wilderness Tours and Natural History Tours; it sponsored a subsistence brochure and newsletter; it published a book on the park’s bird life; and it played a major role—financially and logistically—in sponsoring the park’s annual Winterfest. The internships, the tour booklets, the twice-yearly *Alpenglow* issues and Winterfest-related activities became staples of the association’s assistance program and have continued to the present day. To these efforts, in 2004, were added assistance in preparing exhibits for the new science and learning center and assistance in preparing the new *Heartbeats of Denali* film for the new visitor center.¹⁶⁵ In addition, ANHA has funded sundry other guidebooks, brochures, exhibits, and similar materials over the years.

Another way in which the Alaska Natural History Association was able to further park purposes was through its sponsorship of the Denali Institute. Wallace and Jerryne Cole, from Camp Denali, had spearheaded the establishment of this nonprofit educational organization, which was established in December 1998; its purpose was to provide

Figure 2. Park Cooperating Association Revenues, 1960 to Present

Mount McKinley Natural History Association:

Year	Total Sales	Program Support	Year	Total Sales	Program Support
1960	\$994	\$345	1965	\$2,881	\$866
1961	1,824	563	1966	3,820	584
1962	2,689	245	1967	3,530	2,323
1963	2,681	275	1968	5,494	705
1964	2,513	220	1969	4,858	2,687

Alaska National Parks and Monuments Association:

Year	Total Sales	Program Support	Year	Total Sales	Program Support
1970	n.a.	\$ 956	1974	\$39,025	\$5,037
1971	\$18,758	7,255	1975	46,818	3,534
1972	21,474	3,988	1976	81,815	5,485
1973	29,796	3,840	1977	109,236	7,078

Alaska Natural History Association:

Year	Total Sales	Program Support	Year	Total Sales	Program Support
1978	\$119,807	\$ 6,120	1993	\$1,733,394	\$487,987
1979	155,633	21,053	1994	1,869,087	480,065
1980	159,629	25,012	1995	2,117,393	514,967
1981	190,783	35,480	1996	2,286,380	574,092
1982	196,558	33,192	1997	2,328,335	606,989
1983	258,229	39,605	1998	2,375,109	444,852
1984	290,759	90,082	1999	2,538,392	587,191
1985	364,717	103,629	2000	2,649,662	531,534
1986	536,311	142,285	2001	2,713,835	652,073
1987	782,708	211,645	2002	3,423,993	854,269
1988	947,685	272,980	2003	3,307,124	787,629
1989	911,807	261,485	2004	3,934,247	908,664
1990	1,181,839	285,570	2005	4,415,455	828,503
1991	1,228,123	319,796	2006	4,998,246	668,170
1992	1,559,796	441,206	2007	5,573,600	710,968

Note: "Total Sales" includes sales of all branch sales, tour booklets, etc. "Program Support" includes all revenues given back to the NPS (either the park or the regional office) resulting of cooperating association revenues. Source: Charles Money files.

While the original Eielson Visitor Center was being torn down and a new one constructed, 2005 to 2008, a temporary contact station was provided in a large fabric-membrane structure at Toklat. That structure, shown above, contained a visitor information area, exhibits, and an ANHA sales area. NPS Photo



park visitors with in-depth field programs on the natural, cultural, and political history of the area. Beginning in 1999 it offered a program that monitored songbird populations in the Kantishna area; two years later, it broadened its scope by colluding with the NPS and hosted college-level (UAF accredited) field courses to entrance-area park visitors.¹⁶⁶ The institute remained an independent entity until 2003, when it merged with the Alaska Natural History Association; that same year, it also began to offer teacher training programs and a weeklong field camp (based at Igloo Campground) focused on wolf behavior.¹⁶⁷

Beginning in 2004, Denali Institute activities were subsumed within the aegis of the new Murie Science and Learning Center. Then, after the 2005 field season, ANHA leaders—recognizing that a variety of public agencies were interested in sponsoring their own learning opportunities—merged the Denali Institute and its functions into the more comprehensive Alaska Natural History Institutes. The new organization offers a variety of field seminars and teacher trainings, all of which are based at the Murie Science and Learning Center; although it often coordinates its educational offerings through the NPS, it also works through the U.S. Forest Service and other entities.¹⁶⁸ The Murie Center, in its short history, has moved to the forefront of both teaching and research, not only for Denali but for seven other Alaskan park units; not only is it a focus of education for a wide variety of public interests, but it is also a center of inventory and monitoring activities for parks throughout interior and northern Alaska.¹⁶⁹

Future visitors to Denali can look forward to a new, improved Eielson Visitor Center. As noted above, this visitor center was built between 1958 and 1960 and expanded between 1974 and 1976. Despite that expansion, however, the huge increases in park visitation between the mid-1970s and the mid-1990s brought increasing overcrowding problems to the site—particularly on cool or windy days, which are all too common in the vicinity—and there was also a widespread recognition that the facility was too visually intrusive in that isolated, treeless area. Based on that reality, the agency recommended, as part of its 1996-97 *Front Country Development Concept Plan*, that Eielson Visitor Center be demolished and replaced with a more modern, ecologically sensitive structure.¹⁷⁰ Specific steps needed to fulfill that goal took place in 2003, when agency officials completed most of the design work for a new structure, and in the spring of 2004 the agency approved an environmental assessment that allowed construction work to begin.¹⁷¹ That September the 44-year-old visitor center closed for the last time, and demolition began in mid-summer 2005. Present plans call for a new Eielson Visitor Center, which will have more than twice the interior space as the former facility, to open in the spring of 2008.¹⁷²

Interpreting Beyond the Park's Boundaries

For more than a half-century after the park's establishment, NPS staff had few opportunities to broadcast the park and its attractions to non-visitors. To some extent this was because the park's small staff and limited budget constrained opportunities for these types of activities. In a

larger sense, however, the problem was technological: the only realistic media for speaking to a non-park audience was public speaking along with slides or movies, and the time and expense of riding the Alaska Railroad to outside communities severely limited the opportunity for these public presentations.

Given those constraints, park staff—almost always the superintendent—did speak to outside groups from time to time. During the mid-1920s, Supt. Karstens spoke to both the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce and the city's Women's Club.¹⁷³ Beginning in 1934, the agency reached out to territorial residents when federal-building offices opened in Fairbanks and Anchorage. Both offices turned out to be temporary, however.¹⁷⁴ No sooner had World War II ended than Acting Superintendent Grant Pearson spoke to several Anchorage civic organizations about park development, he gave several illustrated talks in both Anchorage and Fairbanks, and from 1946 to 1948 NPS rangers attended both the Fairbanks Ice Carnival and the Anchorage Fur Rendezvous, where they served as event judges.¹⁷⁵ From 1950 to 1952, as noted above, Superintendent Pearson made frequent wintertime trips to the military base at Big Delta, where he gave talks and showed movies.¹⁷⁶ Pearson retired in 1956, but he continued his outreach efforts in later years; in 1960 park staff lent him the film *The Wilderness of Denali* “for showing to native children along the Yukon River,” and three years later he borrowed two films to show at various Fairbanks-area military facilities and to Nenana school children.¹⁷⁷

Throughout this period, access problems made it difficult to provide interpretative messages to the various communities on the park's margins. But soon after the Anchorage-Fairbanks Highway was completed in 1971, park personnel began to increasingly interact with these and other local populations. The first year that the new road was open, park staff presented “environmentally oriented talks” to “schools and special groups” in Healy, Clear, Nenana, and Fairbanks, and elsewhere. In 1973 Daniel Kuehn, the new park superintendent, noted that “efforts have been made to bridge the communications gap between the neighboring communities of Healy and Cantwell,” but he candidly admitted that the park's efforts were enjoying more success at Healy than at Cantwell.¹⁷⁸ The park's interpretive specialist, Bill Garry, then began discussions with local school staff about how the park could assist them. The result of those discussions was an environmental education workshop, which was held in Healy in February 1975. During this period, park superintendent Daniel Kuehn—who was himself the father of a Tri-Valley School student—served as a volunteer chaperone for the school's basketball team on its road trips, and he often used those opportunities to show park films and discuss park-related issues.¹⁷⁹

Intermittent programs to local schools continued for the remainder of the 1970s and on into the 1980s, but it was not until 1991 that the park was able to expand its outreach opportunities. The first “Denali Week” was held that year, which reached over 300 students from communities from Talkeetna north to Nenana.¹⁸⁰ This outreach



The new Eielson Visitor Center, seen here under construction in 2006, opened in the early summer of 2008. NPS Photo

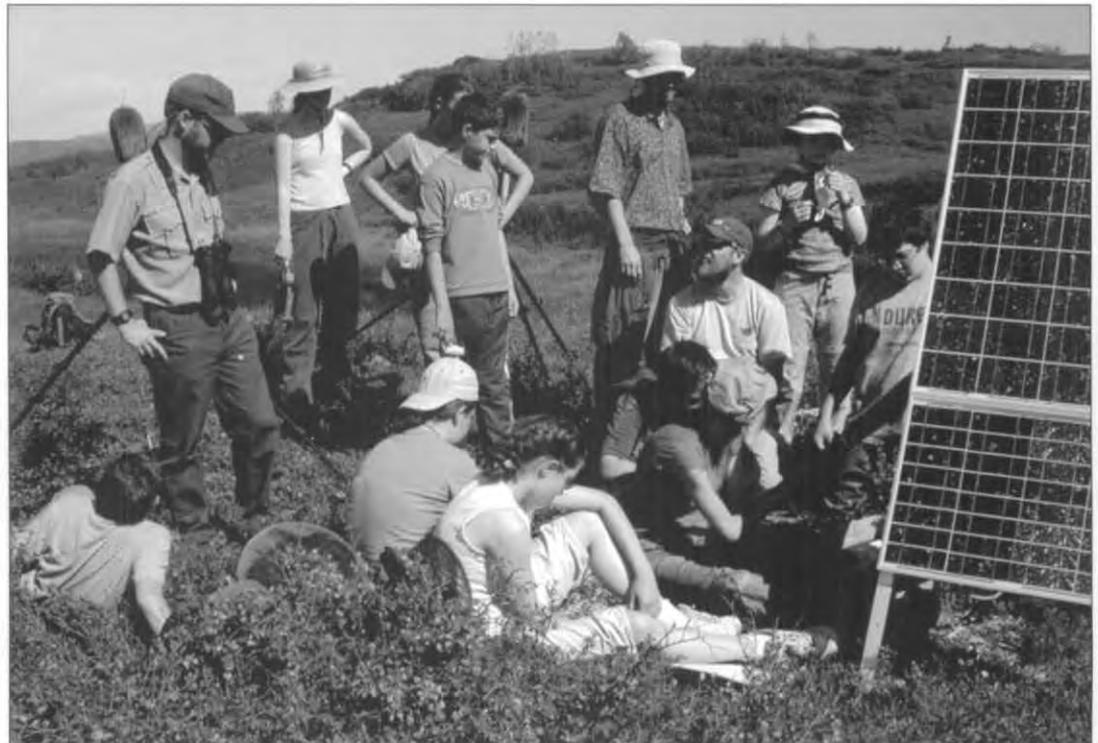
In 2007 a new interpretive program, the Kantishna Experience, was initiated, providing visitors with a thematic bus trip to the Kantishna Mining District where interpretive rangers presented programs on park history, including a visit to the Fannie Quigley House, pictured above. NPS Photo



effort expanded during the 1990s, and during the years since 2000 programs devoted to local schools have included “Denali Days,” an updated version of Denali Week that includes visits to Willow and such off-road communities as McGrath, Nikolai, and Tanana; the Denali Discovery Camp program, a partnership program (with the Denali Foundation, now called the Denali Education Center) in which local students work in the field with park researchers; the Denali Science and Storytelling Camp, with a curriculum developed by the Denali Borough School

District; the “Denali Project II,” a simulated climb up Mount McKinley designed for middle school students; and staff-led development of curricula based on the park’s bears, wildlife populations, and mountaineering.¹⁸¹ Most of these programs have involved either staff visits to school facilities or school-group visits to the park, but since the mid-1990s the park website has been available as a learning tool, and since 2003 the agency has been able to offer students “electronic field trips” to the park.¹⁸²

A partnership between the NPS and the Denali Education Center, Denali Discovery Camp has provided Denali Borough School District students with learning opportunities by working on projects with park researchers. These students are learning about sound monitoring from an NPS researcher (center). NPS Photo



¹ *Fairbanks Tri-Weekly News-Miner*, December 1, 1921, 5.

² Frank Norris, *Gawking at the Midnight Sun: The Tourist in Early Alaska*, Alaska Historical Commission Studies in History No. 170 (Anchorage, the Commission, June 1985), 40.

³ *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, December 11, 1929, 8.

⁴ Norris, *Gawking at the Midnight Sun*, 42-43, 46-47, 58.

⁵ Norris, *Gawking at the Midnight Sun*, 49-52. As Supt. Frank T. Been noted in a letter to his superiors, "There are places on the Alaska Railroad from where the 'mountain' is startling [sic] beautiful and impressive—occasionally, more so than from vantage points in the park. ... These railroad vantage points are far south and outside the park. ... Because of Congressional importance placed on travel figures, should we include through train travel on our travel reports?" Been to Regional Director, May 7, 1941, in "Interpreter's Reports" (File 207.11), CCF, RG 79, NARA 5B. Travel reports from the late 1930s and early 1940s show that while a smattering of park visitors arrived via airplane, automobile (hauled on a railroad flat car), or even by motorcycle, about 99 percent arrived by train and relied on the park concessioner for in-park transportation.

⁶ Various superintendent's reports note that concessions personnel, for a short time, considered the idea of moving their main camp westward as the road was extended; in September 1925, for example, Karstens wrote that "Igloo Creek, they believe, would be the logical place for the next move." But given the Savage Camp improvements in 1926, they evidently decided against it. SMR, September 1925, 4; May 1926, 3; June 1926, 4. Also see George Lingo, "Mt. McKinley National Park," *Cordova Daily Times All-Alaska Review for 1928*, 31.

⁷ *New York Times*, January 4, 1933, 18.

⁸ Lena Howard interview, August 4, 1972, Tape #506, DENA Archives, SMR, May 1926, 2.

⁹ SMR, January 1926, 2, 3; February 1926, 3.

¹⁰ The agency's library in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia shows that park folders have been published, revised, or reprinted every few years since the late 1920s. The only time in which more than three years lapsed between new issues was during the 1940s; due to World War II and its aftermath, no new folders were produced between 1942 and 1948. The lack of folders, in 1946, forced park staff to distribute a illustrated Alaska Railroad folder from 1941; in 1947, due to a reprinting, rangers were distributing the 1941 park guide. SMR, March 1946, 2; September 1947, 5; April 1948, 2.

¹¹ See, for example, *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, April 5, 1924, 4; July 7, 1924, 8; August 25, 1925, 4; May 5, 1926, 2; *Seward Daily Gateway*, May 26, 1927, 4; July 11, 1927, 3; May 4, 1929, 6; April 27, 1935, 2.

¹² SMR, June 1932, 3; July 1932, 3.

¹³ SMR, June 1933, 3; July 1933, 2; August 1933, 3.

¹⁴ SMR, June 1934, 3; July 1934, 3; August 1934, 3.

¹⁵ SMR, June 1935, 2; July 1935, 5; August 1935, 5.

¹⁶ SMR, June 1936, 5; July 1936, 5; August 1936, 5; September 1936, 5. No motion pictures were shown at Savage River Camp during 1935 or 1936 due to a lack of power facilities at the camp.

¹⁷ SMR, June 1937, 3, 5; July 1937, 4; September 1937, 5.

¹⁸ SMR, May 1938, 4; July 1938, 4; August 1938, 5; September 1938, 3. As noted in the park's "Monthly Report of Educational Activities" (which was inaugurated in 1938), an August railroad washout forced 46 visitors to lay over for two extra days. Rangers responded to the challenge by providing impromptu lectures on the park's history, anthropology, geology, and botany.

¹⁹ George R. Wilson, "McKinley Now and Then," *Alaska Magazine* 42 (January 1976), A2.

²⁰ SMR, June 1939, 3; July 1939, 4; August 1939, 3.

²¹ Grant Pearson, in *My Life of High Adventure* (New York, Ballantine Books, 1962), p. 188, noted that "Once I saw Frank Been outside headquarters, examining a spruce twig. He had a magnifying glass. He looked absorbed, and happy. He was back with his first love, and I began to see how strange and difficult must have been the transition from naturalist to park superintendent."

²² Been to Cammerer, July 13, 1939, in Folder 501 ("Publicity – General"), Box 1408, General Files (Entry 7), RG 79, NARA CP. As noted in Chapter 5, Been's attitude toward the park dogs soon changed; by the summer of 1941 Been decided to keep only sufficient dogs for longer patrols and for interpretive demonstration purposes, and during World War II the park divested itself of all of its dog teams.

²³ SMR, June 1940, 2, 4, 5; July 1940, 2, 3; August 1940, 3. The NPS, as noted above, had been exhibiting the park dogs at the headquarters-area kennels since the mid-1920s. In 1936, rangers catered even more to visitors' interests when they brought four young pups to Savage River Camp. The photogenic animals spent the summer in kennels not far from the camp's tourist tents. SMR, February 1936, 3; July 1936, 6.

²⁴ SMR, April 1941, 1, 4; May 1941, 3; June 1941, 3; July 1941, 4, 5; August 1941, 2.

²⁵ SMR, March 1943, 2; April 1943, 1, 2; May 1943, 1; June 1943, 2; July 1943, 2.

²⁶ SMR, May 1943, 2; June 1943, 2; July 1943, 3; October 1943, 2; May 1944, 2.

²⁷ SMR, August 1943, 2; January 1944, 1; May 1944, 2; February 1945, 1.

- ²⁸ SMR, May 1945, 2; June 1945, 2.
- ²⁹ As noted in Chapter 5, the Alaska Railroad had operated the park hotel since its initial opening in June 1939, and it had held the park concession since the end of January 1942. But because of wartime restrictions, there had been no civilian tourist travel to Alaska during the summers of 1942 through 1945, inclusively.
- ³⁰ SMR, July 1946, 2, 4; August 1946, 3; September 1946, 3.
- ³¹ SMR, January 1947, 3; September 1947, 5; November 1948, 2. The formal title of Dixon's book was *Fauna of the National Parks of the United States; Birds and Mammals of Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska* (Fauna Series No. 3); its contents were based on the data he had gathered during the summers of 1926 and 1932.
- ³² SMR, September 1947, 3; November 1947, 2; January 1948, 3; September 1948, 5.
- ³³ SMR, July 1948, 3, 4; April 1949, 2; July 1949, 2.
- ³⁴ SMR, May 1946, 4; September 1947, 3; January 1948, 4; June 1948, 4. Superintendent Pearson noted that visitors were "surprisingly complimentary about the modest museum exhibits." He frankly admitted, however, that hotel staff directed many guests there "out of desperation to suggest methods for diversion." SMR, November 1947, 2; February 1948, 4.
- ³⁵ SMR, June 1948, 5; June 1951, 1; Alan K. Hogenauer, "Gone, But Not Forgotten: The Delisted Units of the U.S. National Park System," *George Wright Society Forum* 7:4 (1991), 10-11.
- ³⁶ SMR, June 1952, 2; NPS, *MOMC Park Naturalist Report*, March and June 1953, in DENA Archives; DENA Administrative History, Volume 1, Appendix D.
- ³⁷ SMR, June 1950, 2; July 1950, 3; August 1950, 2; September 1950, 3.
- ³⁸ SMR, July 1951, 2, 3; August 1951, 2; September 1951, 2.
- ³⁹ SMR, May 1952, 2; June 1952, 2; July 1952, 2; August 1952, 4.
- ⁴⁰ SMR, July 1952, 2; June 1953, 2; July 1953, 2; August 1953, 3; September 1953, 2.
- ⁴¹ SMR, July 1950, 3; September 1950, 3. Jane Bryant (March 2007 review comments) notes that the building was moved first in 1950, and in 1952 it was moved again to its present headquarters location, north of the park road.
- ⁴² SMR, November 1950, 2; December 1950, 2; January 1952, 1; February 1953, 2.
- ⁴³ SMR, February 1950, 1; March 1951, 1; July 1952, 1; Lyman L. Woodman, *Duty Station Northwest: The U.S. Army in Alaska and Western Canada, 1867-1987; Volume Three, 1945-1987* (Anchorage, Alaska Historical Society, 1999), 55, 60, 84, 93-99. The school was later known as the Northern Warfare Training Center.
- ⁴⁴ SMR, October 1953, 2; November 1953, 2; December 1953, 2; February 1954, 2.
- ⁴⁵ Ralph Turman (Seasonal Ranger) to Chief Ranger Robert Branges, "Monthly Narrative Report" for July and August 1955, in "A2615 Monthly Narrative Report, Chief Ranger" file, Box 2, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.
- ⁴⁶ NPS, "Annual Report on Information and Interpretive Services" for 1955, January 15, 1956, in "Interpretation" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.
- ⁴⁷ SMR, various dates, June 1954 to June 1957.
- ⁴⁸ NPS, *Mount McKinley, Annual Report on Information and Interpretive Services*, January 15, 1956, in "Interpretation" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.
- ⁴⁹ NPS, *Mission 66 Prospectus* for Mount McKinley NP, April 1956, pp. 9-12; in NPS-TIC Microfiche Collection #184/MPNAR. Visitor centers were largely a product of the Mission 66 era; the NPS had only three such centers prior to 1956, but by 1960, 45 visitor centers had been opened or authorized. Barry Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective* (1986), Chapter 3, "Museums, Visitor Centers, and the New Look" section, accessed via NPS website.
- ⁵⁰ SMR, July 1956, 2; December 1956, 2, 4; NPS, *Mission 66 Prospectus MOMC*, p. 12 (revised April 12, 1957).
- ⁵¹ Planning documents show that the Wonder Lake visitor center proposal remained viable throughout the Mission 66 planning process and was an element of the park's master plan, which was approved in February 1959. As noted in Chapter 7, agency personnel made numerous attempts during the Mission 66 period to build a lodge near Wonder Lake, and as late as June 1960 a proposal arose that would include a visitor center in conjunction with various "concession facilities." The construction of Eielson, however, largely mitigated the need for other west-end interpretive facilities. "Proposed Interpretive Facilities" (chart MOMC-3116-A, December 1958) and "Interpretive Facilities" (chart MOMC-3116-B, February 1959), both in NPS Aperture Card Collection, TIC; SMR, June 1960, 8.
- ⁵² SMR, June 1957, 3; July 1957, 3, 5; NPS, *Mission 66 for Mount McKinley NP*, May 13, 1957, 8.
- ⁵³ SMR, February 1958, 5; March 1958, 5; April 1958, 4; July 1960, 5; July 1961, 2; *Anchorage Daily News*, April 11, 1958, 12; *Anchorage Daily Times*, April 12, 1958, 16.
- ⁵⁴ See E. T. Scoyen to Tony Smith, August 12, 1958, in File D30, "Mission 66 Road Issues" folder, DENA Archives; SMR, May 1957, 6, and March 1961, 5.
- ⁵⁵ Two large signs, to be installed at the Stony Hill road turnout, were crafted during the winter of 1953-54, and in 1955 personnel at both the park and regional office were hard at work on "roadside interpretational devices" at the park. SMR, February 1954, photo; July 1955, 2.

⁵⁶ SMR, March 1956, 2; NPS, *Mission 66 Prospectus*, p. 12 (revised April 12, 1957); NPS, *Mission 66 for Mount McKinley NP*, May 13, 1957, 3.

⁵⁷ [Neil J. Reid,] "Roadside Interpretive Sign Program, MOMC," in File D62-15, Visitor Center Planning, Box D, Catalog 9169, DENA Archives.

⁵⁸ SMR, August 1957, 3; "Proposed Interpretive Facilities" (chart MOMC-3116-A, December 1958) and "Interpretive Facilities" (chart MOMC-3116-B, February 1959), both in NPS Aperture Card Collection, TIC.

⁵⁹ SMR, February 1959, 3; April 1959, 3; May 1959, 6; June 1959, 4; July 1959, 4. Some of the purported downsides of a roadside sign program are discussed in "Roadside Interpretive Sign Program, MOMC," noted above. Adolph Murie, who was the park's biologist at the time, was a vocal sign opponent.

⁶⁰ SMR, May 1960, 4; July 1960, 7; May 1961, 6; July 1962, 5. Given the grizzlies' depredations, park personnel in later years boarded over the roadside markers each fall and removed the covers the following spring. SMR, June 1964, 3; September 1964, 2; May 1966, 3. Based on the recollections of longtime observers, park staff may have installed all 19 signs, or perhaps as few as 17.

⁶¹ SMR, June 1963, 2; Steve Carwile interview, December 14, 2006.

⁶² SMR, August 1956, 4; February 1961, 3; June 1961, 8; August 1963, 4; SAR, 1972, 7; Steve Carwile interview, January 16, 2007.

⁶³ SMR, November 1957, 2; March 1959, 2; June 1959, 6; June 1961, 5; March 1962, 4; August 1962, 5; August 1966, 3; May 1967, 2.

⁶⁴ SMR, February 1963, 2; August 1964, 3; August 1965, 2.

⁶⁵ SMR, June 1957, 4.

⁶⁶ SMR, April 1958, 2; July 1958, 4; August 1958, 3; September 1958, 3.

⁶⁷ SMR, January 1950, 2; May 1953, 2; June 1953, 3; January 1956, 2; March 1956, 2; May 1956, 2; July 1956, 4; August 1956, 3; May 1957, 4; October 1957, 4.

⁶⁸ SMR, November 1955, 2; December 1957, 2; September 1958, 3; January 1959, 2; June 1959, 4; October 1959, 2; April 1960, 4. The momentum for a natural history handbook appears to have faded away for two reasons: park naturalist Verde Watson showed less interest for it than his predecessor, Jim Reid, and by the spring of 1960 Adolph Murie (who had been asked to review a draft of the handbook) had made it known that he had completed a manuscript on the park mammals and that he was "working on a revision of the bird manuscript." (These manuscripts, as noted below and in Chapter 12, were published in 1962 and 1963, respectively.) The information in these books largely eliminated the need for a natural history handbook.

⁶⁹ Nancarrow, in a note to the regional naturalist, pragmatically noted that "from the looks of our budget it will be some time before the Naturalist Division here has much money to work with and a Natural History Association appears to be the one solution which can aid our work." Nancarrow to Dorr G. Yeager, November 19, 1951, in File 871 (Associations, Club, Committees, 1951-53), Box 84, CCF, RG 79, NARA 5B.

⁷⁰ SMR, January 1952, 4; November 1953, 2; February 1954, 2; Jane Bryant email, December 15, 2006. By this period, national park cooperating associations had been in existence for 30 years (the first had been the Yosemite Museum Association, founded in 1923), and by 1952 there were 33 such associations in operation. Yosemite Association website (www.yosemite.org/newsroom/pressreleases/2002/032203.htm) and Rose Fennell (WASO) email, January 10, 2007.

⁷¹ SMR, December 1958, 3; January 1959, 2; February 1959, 1.

⁷² SMR, August 1959, 4; September 1959, 4. More than a year elapsed between the association's founding and the receipt of Walsh's funds because his will bequeathed money to the Mount McKinley National Park Association, a group that did not exist. Neil Reid to Acting Supt. MOMC, January 18, 1960, in "Annual Reports, 1960-70" folder, ANHA financial files, Anchorage.

⁷³ As park naturalist (and association organizer) Jim Reid noted in early 1961, "After a slight period of uncertainty, the James W. Walsh Jr. estate was settled. The Mount McKinley Natural History Association received a total of \$16,404.59. We still have little knowledge of Mr. Walsh's past connection with Mount McKinley National Park, but we will make every effort to conduct the affairs of the Association, which he so generously supported, as a credit to his name." Reid to Supt. MOMC, January 20, 1961, in "Annual Reports, 1960-70" folder, ANHA. Walsh, it appears, had been a resident of Nassau County (on Long Island), New York, and either he or his family had been active in the American Alpine Club, which suggests that he knew Brad Washburn. American Alpine Club Photo Collection, accession P 2005.076.001 and -.002.

⁷⁴ The original (May 1959) entrance station, due to construction work near the Denali Highway's Alaska Railroad crossing, was placed along the road between the McKinley Park airstrip and the Alaska Railroad tracks, and northeast of the new gas station complex. A year later, with construction complete, the entrance station was moved north to a spot just east of the railroad tracks and perhaps 100 feet south of the highway right-of-way, where it remained for twelve years. NPS, "Annual Report on Information and Interpretive Activities, MOMC" for 1959 (January 15, 1960) and for 1960 (January 6, 1961), both located in "Interpretation" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives; Steve Carwile email, December 20, 2006; Jane Bryant email, December 27, 2006.

- ⁷⁵ SMR, June 1959, 4; July 1960, 4, 5; June 1961, 6; NPS, "Annual Report on Information and Interpretive Activities, Mount McKinley" for 1960, January 6, 1961, in "Interpretation" file, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.
- ⁷⁶ W.H. Bergen to Sen. Theodore F. Green, July 29, 1958 and August 25, 1958, and Roger Ernst (Assistant Secretary of the Interior) to Senator Green, August 11, 1958, in File A3815 ("Public Relations, 1958-60"), Box 6, Accession 9NNS 79 90 002, NARA SB.
- ⁷⁷ SMR, June 1960, 3; August 1960, 8; October 1960, 3; June 1961, 6; NPS, Annual Report, "Information and Interpretive Services," MOMC, for 1961, January 26, 1962, in "Interpretation" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives. In 1960, agency personnel mapped out four possible visitor center sites, all located adjacent to the park hotel. Drawing MOMC-3140 (July 1960), in NPS Aperture Card Collection, AKRO.
- ⁷⁸ SMR, March 1962, 3; May 1962, 2; June 1962, 5, 6. The other two information desks were the park orientation center (which included the museum) at headquarters (which operated during 1958 and 1959) and Eielson Visitor Center (which opened in 1960).
- ⁷⁹ SMR, July 1962, 4; May 1965, 3; May 1967, 2.
- ⁸⁰ SMR, October 1962, 2; February 1963, 2; NPS, *MOMC Interpretive Report*, October 1962, 1, in DENA Library.
- ⁸¹ SMR, October 1962, 2; June 1963, 3, 7; August 1965; Drawing MOMC-3102-B (June 1962), in NPS Aperture Card Collection, AKRO.
- ⁸² SMR, April 1966, 2; May 1966, 2-3; June 1966, 2; July 1966, 3.
- ⁸³ NPS, "Information and Interpretive Services 1966 Annual Report," MOMC, February 14, 1967, in "Interpretation" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.
- ⁸⁴ SMR, March 1967, 1; May 1967, 7.
- ⁸⁵ Wallace Cole, in a conversation with Jane Bryant, noted that the concessioner continued to haul visitors in Navy-surplus "White" brand buses (see above) until 1960, when it obtained two 40-passenger Blue Bird buses. A third Blue Bird bus was added in 1967. Jane Bryant email, December 28, 2006.
- ⁸⁶ *Alaska Review* (Ketchikan), December 15, 1958, 4; "Watch for Caribou and Grizzly Bears," *Sunset* 128 (June 1962), 68; "The Great Wildlife Park is Alaska's McKinley," *Sunset* 140 (June 1968), 65; Anchorage Daily Times, May 20, 1971, 70-71; Wallace Cole observations, noted in Jane Bryant email, December 28, 2006.
- ⁸⁷ SMR, various dates, May 1963 through May 1967. In 1966, for example, daily activities included a two-hour "naturalist hike" at 8:30 a.m.; the 40-minute dog sled demonstration at 2:25 p.m.; the 40-minute "color movie" (a "film by Dr. Adolph Murie with commentary by a park naturalist" at 3:30 p.m.; and the 45-minute evening program at 8:15 p.m. NPS, "Interpretive Activities for Summer Season 1966," in "Interpretation" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.
- ⁸⁸ Entries related to *Magnificence in Trust* are noted in the following SMRs: October 1966, 1; December 1966, 1; February 1967, 2; May 1967, 2. As noted in the 1966 interpretive schedule (see endnote above), a 13½-minute colored slide program at the entrance station and a tundra wildflower walk at Eielson Visitor Center were available upon request.
- ⁸⁹ SMR, February 1961, 4; May 1961, 5; March 1962, 3; April 1962, 3; May 1962, 3.
- ⁹⁰ Jane Bryant email, December 28, 2006.
- ⁹¹ SMR, February 1962, 2; May 1962, 2; July 1963, 6; June 1966, 2; NPS, "Information and Interpretive Services, 1962, Annual Report" for MOMC, January 23, 1963, in "Interpretation" file, Collection 00495, DENA Archives; Steve Carwile interview, January 16, 2007; ANHA, Annual Report, 1972, 2.
- ⁹² Yeager to Supt. MOMC, November 28, 1951, in File 871 (Associations, Club, Committees, 1951-53), Box 84, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB.
- ⁹³ In 1954, an NPS official noted that "the first draft on a popular botany manual is far along," and a decade later association personnel weighed publication costs for the book. See Frank R. Oberhansley to Regional Director, Region Two, March 11, 1954, in File K 3823 ("Sales Publications, 1953-1960"), Box 91, Accession No. 9NNS 79 89 005, NARA SB; SMR, April 1964, 5.
- ⁹⁴ SMR, November 1962, 3; January 1963, 2; February 1963, 2; July 1963, 6; January 1964, 5; NPS, "Narrative Report of Information and Interpretive Services, 1964" for MOMC, January 18, 1965, in "Interpretation" file, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.
- ⁹⁵ SMR, April 1964, 5; December 1966, 1; January 1967, 2; March 1967, 3; May 1967, 3; SAR, 1975, 2; ANHA, *Annual Report*, 1964, 3.
- ⁹⁶ NPS, "Articles of Incorporation of the Alaska National Parks and Monuments Association," November 27, 1970, in "Articles of Amendment" folder, "Articles, Bylaws, and Contracts" Section, ANHA files, Anchorage.
- ⁹⁷ NPS, "Information and Interpretive Services, Annual Report" for 1969, MOMC, in "Interpretation" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives; NPS, "Annual Public Contact Report" (MOMC) for 1970 and 1971, in "Annual Reports, 1953-72" file, Box 5, ARCC-00183 (DENA 00378), AKRO.
- ⁹⁸ SAR, 1972, 2, 6.
- ⁹⁹ Steve Carwile email, December 14, 2006.

¹⁰⁰ *Anchorage Daily Times*, July 17, 1972, 20; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 30, 1972, 17; "Mount McKinley Again Will Get Record Visitors," *Sunset* (Central Edition) 150 (May 1973), 59; SAR, 1972, 2. In 1973, the concessioner briefly experimented with serving hot lunches at Eielson. The logistics, however, proved difficult, and it soon reverted to serving box lunches. SAR, 1973, 2.

¹⁰¹ *Anchorage Daily Times*, May 27, 1976, Visitors Guide:32; *New York Times*, June 4, 1978, X:1; *Anchorage Daily Times*, August 24, 1980, E-7.

¹⁰² *Anchorage Daily Times*, January 4, 1973 (p. 2) noted that "9,000 tourists paid \$15 a head to ride the Outdoor World Ltd. wildlife tour buses for eight hours, but 24,279 other visitors rode free on park service-provided shuttle buses."

¹⁰³ "Mount McKinley Again Will Get Record Visitors," 59.

¹⁰⁴ In early 1973, newspapers and magazines reported that park visitation from 1971 to 1972 had shot up more than 500 percent, from 58,342 to 306,027. It was soon revealed, however, that these figures represented *total* park visitation, which included all traffic on the Parks Highway. Soon afterward, the NPS agreed that a more realistic visitation figure pertained to recreational visitors; that total had roughly doubled from 1971 to 1972 (more specifically, from 44,528 to 88,615). *Anchorage Daily Times*, January 4, 1973, 2; "Mount McKinley Again Will Get Record Visitors," 58.

¹⁰⁵ Chief Naturalist to Supt. MOMC, "Interpretive Activities, 1975," January 15, 1976, in "Misc." file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives. The NPS's slide show was apparently moved from the evening to the afternoon because the concessioner instituted "movie nights" offering both current and classic feature films. These films, which proved popular both for visitors and park-area employees, continued for years afterward. Steve Carwile interview, January 16, 2007.

¹⁰⁶ Chief Naturalist to Supt. MOMC, January 15, 1976 (see above). As noted in the 1973 *Superintendent's Annual Report* (p. 4), the discovery walk was "an interpretive innovation using the shuttle bus system to get to various parts of the park to 'discover' what is there."

¹⁰⁷ The historic Toklat Patrol Cabin, built by rangers Grant Pearson and Lee Swisher in 1927, is now called the Pearson Cabin. Supt. MOMC to Area Director, Alaska, "Interpretive Activities, 1976," January 11, 1977, in "Misc." file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives; *Anchorage Daily Times*, April 22, 1976, 17; SAR, 1975, 6.

¹⁰⁸ SAR, 1977, 5-6; SAR, 1978, 2; Chief Naturalist to Supt. MOMC, "Annual Report Narrative, Interpretive Division" for 1978 (February 9, 1979) and 1979 (June 14, 1980), both in Catalog 9169, DENA Archives.

¹⁰⁹ SAR, May 1962, 3; SAR, June 1962, 5.

¹¹⁰ NPS, "Information and Interpretive Services 1966 Annual Report," in "Interpretation" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.

¹¹¹ SAR, 1972, 2; 1973, 2; 1974, 8; 1975, 6; Supt. MOMC to Area Director, Alaska, "Interpretive Activities, 1976," January 11, 1977, in "Misc." file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.

¹¹² NPS, "Riley Creek Information Station" briefing statement, April 4, 1979, in "General Visitation, 1971-80" folder, DENA Administrative History Collection.

¹¹³ SAR, 1982, 1.

¹¹⁴ NPS, "Annual Report Narrative, Interpretive Division" for 1979; *Anchorage Daily Times*, August 17, 1980, E-8.

¹¹⁵ SAR, 1980, 4. During the 16 days that the tent was down, NPS staff offered special programs in the main hotel lobby and West Wing lobby.

¹¹⁶ "Interpretive Activities, 1975" for MOMC, p. 2; NPS, "Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska" (park folder), 1973, in DENA Box 1, HFC. The trail guide had been in the works since the late 1960s; see SMR, March 1967, 2; and NPS, "Information and Interpretive Services, Annual Report" for 1969, February 17, 1970, in "Interpretation" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.

¹¹⁷ "Interpretive Activities, 1976" for MOMC, pp. 2-3. It was still hoped, during this period, that a park natural history handbook might be published, as well as a geology handbook. As noted elsewhere, the geology handbook was completed in 1979; the natural history handbook, however, was never finished.

¹¹⁸ Steve Carwile interview, December 22, 2006.

¹¹⁹ SAR, 1977, 6-7; SAR, 1978, 3; SAR, 1980, 5; "Annual Report Narrative, Interpretive Division," February 9, 1979 and June 14, 1980; Charles Money to author, telephone call, January 4, 2007.

¹²⁰ SAR, 1980, 6; SAR, 1985, 2. NPS Director William Whelan designated 1979 as "the year of the visitor," and the emergence of the *Alpenglow* may have been one manifestation of that commemoration. *Denali Alpenglow* 1 (Summer 1979), 1; Marisa James email, January 18, 2007.

¹²¹ "Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation of Alaska Natural History Association," February 26, 1979; "By-Laws of the Alaska Natural History Association," March 7, 1979; both in "ANHA, etc., 1951-96" file, DENA Administrative History Collection; ANHA, *1979 Annual Report*, 2, in ANHA files, Anchorage.

¹²² SAR, 1980, 4-5; 1985, 2; 1986, 3; 1987, 5; 1991, 8; Marisa James email, January 18, 2007.

¹²³ SAR, 1987, 5; 1991, 8; Marisa James email, January 18, 2007; Ingrid Nixon email, March 23, 2007.

¹²⁴ NPS, *Draft GMP, DENA*, 16; NPS, *Final GMP, DENA*, 18.

¹²⁵ SAR, 1987, 3; 1988, 1; 1989, 2; 1990, 2.

- ¹²⁶ NPS, *Denali Alpenglow*, 1992, 12.
- ¹²⁷ Wallace Cole observations, noted in Jane Bryant email, December 28, 2006.
- ¹²⁸ The longer park tour was called the Tundra Wildlife Tour for many years; since 2003, it has been known as the Tundra Wilderness Tour.
- ¹²⁹ *Denali Alpenglow*, issues of 1992 (p. 9) and 2003 (p. 4).
- ¹³⁰ ANHA, *Annual Report*, editions of 1980 (p. 1) and 1981 (pp. 1-2).
- ¹³¹ Charles Money, telephone call to the author, January 4, 2007; NPS, *Annual Report on NPS Cooperating Associations*, 1987 and 1988 editions; ANHA, *Annual Report*, editions of 1986 (p. 1) and 1991 (p. 16).
- ¹³² SAR, 1980, 5; SAR, 1984, 2; SAR, 1987, 8; Kathy Loux email, January 9, 2007.
- ¹³³ Jane Anderson email, January 5, 2007; Kathy Loux email, January 9, 2007.
- ¹³⁴ NPS, *Annual Report on NPS Cooperating Associations*, 1986 and 1987 editions; sales chart (1959-2006) attached to Charles Money email, January 9, 2007; ANHA, *Annual Report*, 1980, 1.
- ¹³⁵ Kathy Loux email, January 9, 2007.
- ¹³⁶ SAR, 1985, 2; SAR, 1986, 2-3; SAR, 1987, 8.
- ¹³⁷ SAR, 1982, 1; 1983, 2; Marisa James review comments, March 22, 2007.
- ¹³⁸ Regarding book sales, Eielson has offered a natural history association sales outlet since the 1970s, but the concessioner replaced the hotel's NHA sales outlet with its own operation beginning in the early 1970s—either because of George Fleharty's on-site management, or financial arrangements made in the wake of the September 1972 hotel fire. Steve Carwile interview, January 16, 2007.
- ¹³⁹ *Anchorage Daily News*, August 11, 1995, B-1.
- ¹⁴⁰ SAR, 1996, 3-4; Butch Street (DSC) to author, email, April 12, 2006; Street to author, telephone call, April 13, 2006.
- ¹⁴¹ SAR, 2002, 7, 15.
- ¹⁴² NPS, "Finding of No Significant Impact, Construction of New Visitor Facilities in the Entrance Area, DENA," January 31, 2002, courtesy of Steve Carwile.
- ¹⁴³ SAR, 2002, 15; SAR, 2003, 7, 19; NPS, "National Park Service to Dedicate New Murie Science and Learning Center," *AK2Day* (electronic AKRO newsletter), August 12, 2004.
- ¹⁴⁴ NPS, "New Facilities and Visitor Services in Denali Opening in May," *AK2Day*, May 5, 2005; "Focus on the Parks," *Arrowhead* 12 (Spring 2005), 2; NPS, "Park to Celebrate Completion of New Visitor Facilities with Special Activities" (DENA Press Release), August 9, 2005.
- ¹⁴⁵ SAR, 2002, 12.
- ¹⁴⁶ SAR, 1977, 3; SAR, 1978, 1-2; SAR, 1983, 2; SAR, 1984, 2; Roger Robinson interview, January 23, 2007. The Student Conservation Association, according to its website, is a nationwide nonprofit founded in 1957; it introduces high school- and college-age students to careers in the conservation field.
- ¹⁴⁷ SAR, 1989, 2; SAR, 1990, 2; NPS, "Talkeetna Mountain Exhibit" (Drawing DENA-13003, sheet 2 of 12), August 1989, in TIC Aperture Card Collection, AKRO.
- ¹⁴⁸ SAR, 1995, 9; SAR, 1996, 5; SAR, 1997, 5; SAR, 1998, 5.
- ¹⁴⁹ Robert Cunningham, who served as park superintendent from 1980 to 1989, noted in an October 13, 2004 interview that "as budgets went down ... the only place you can really cut, and still maintain the mission of the park, is in interpretation. That's the only place you can cut."
- ¹⁵⁰ SAR, 1995, 12; Marisa James review comments, March 2007.
- ¹⁵¹ SAR, 1996, 13; 1998, 8; 2004, 8.
- ¹⁵² SAR, 1997, 7; 1998, 11; NPS, "Volunteers in Parks, Annual Activity and Expense Report" (DI-150), DENA, 1999 through 2006. Marisa James notes that the hours expended by SCA workers are included in the park's volunteer total, and in fact SCA workers since the mid-1990s have contributed most of the park's volunteer hours.
- ¹⁵³ Kris Fister email, January 18, 2007.
- ¹⁵⁴ *Denali Alpenglow* 14 (Summer 1992), 12.
- ¹⁵⁵ SAR, 1993, 3; SAR, 1995, 5; Jane Bryant review comments, March 26, 2008.
- ¹⁵⁶ SAR, 1998, 5; SAR, 2002, 13.
- ¹⁵⁷ *Denali Alpenglow*, editions of 1992 (p. 11) and 2003 (p. 10); SAR, 1995, 9; 2003, 11; Marisa James email, January 18, 2007.
- ¹⁵⁸ *Denali Alpenglow*, editions of 2003 (pp. 10-11) and 2006 (pp. 10-11).
- ¹⁵⁹ Kris Fister email, January 19, 2007.
- ¹⁶⁰ SAR, 1995, 11; NPS, *Annual Report on NPS Cooperating Associations*, 1995.
- ¹⁶¹ NPS, *Annual Report on NPS Cooperating Associations*, 1987 and 1988.
- ¹⁶² The quote is from NPS, *Management Policies* (December 1988 edition, p. 7:5); its intent is based on authorization language contained in the U.S. Code, Title 16, section 17j-2(e).
- ¹⁶³ New ANHA-sponsored books during this period included Sheri Forbes's *The Nature of Denali: Denali National Park Entrance Area Trail Guide* (1992), William E. Brown's park history, *Denali, Symbol of the Alaskan*

Wild (1993), Jon Nierenberg's *A Backcountry Companion for Denali National Park* (1995); and NPS, *Denali Adventures: Activities for People Young at Heart* (1997).

¹⁶⁴ Alaska Natural History Association, *Annual Report*, editions of 1993 (p. 9) and 1996 (p. 10).

¹⁶⁵ NPS, *Cooperating Association Annual Report of Aid and Revenue*, editions of 2002 (p. 8), 2003 (p. 6), and 2004 (p. 6); Marisa James email, January 18, 2007. The book on the park's bird life is *Birds of Denali*, by Carol McIntyre, Nan Eagleson, and Alan Seegert (2002).

¹⁶⁶ Jerryne Cole, "A History of the Denali Institute," unpublished manuscript, February 2007, courtesy of Ms. Cole.

¹⁶⁷ "Alumni from the 1980s," Univ. of Tennessee website (www.bio.utk.edu/division/alumni/1980.htm); NPS, *Cooperating Association Annual Report of Aid and Revenue*, 2003 edition, p. 6; Philip Hooge email, January 17, 2007. In the fall of 2006, this camp (now part of the Murie Science and Learning Center) was moved to a site near Teklanika Campground. Ingrid Nixon email, March 23, 2007. On January 1, 2008, the Alaska Natural History Association changed its name to the Alaska Geographical Association to better reflect its new role as an educational organization focused on Alaska's natural and cultural heritage.

¹⁶⁸ "Alaska Natural History Institutes," from ANHA website (www.akaskanha.org/alaska-institutes.htm).

¹⁶⁹ Ingrid Nixon email, March 23, 2007.

¹⁷⁰ NPS, *Final Development Concept Plan, Entrance Area and Road Corridor*, December 1996, 23-56.

¹⁷¹ NPS, "Eielson EA Out for Comment," *AK2Day*, April 11, 2004; NPS, "Comment Period Extended for Environmental Assessment for the Construction of a New Eielson Visitor Center and a Permanent Toklat Rest Stop," *AK2Day*, April 26, 2004.

¹⁷² *Anchorage Daily News*, September 22, 2004, B-1; NPS, "New Facilities and Visitor Services in Denali Opening in May," *AK2Day*, May 5, 2005; Mary Tidlow email, July 26, 2006.

¹⁷³ SMR, May 1924, 3; William E. Brown, *Denali: Symbol of the Alaskan Wild* (Denali National Park, Alaska Natural History Association, 1993), 135-36.

¹⁷⁴ SMR, November 1933, 2; April 1934, 5; June 1940, 3; January 1942, 1.

¹⁷⁵ SMR, September 1945, 2; March 1946, 1; February 1947, 2; February 1948, 3; April 1949, 2.

¹⁷⁶ SMR, February 1950, 1; March 1951, 1; July 1952, 1; Lyman L. Woodman, *Duty Station Northwest: Volume Three, 1945-1987*, 55, 60, 84, 93-99.

¹⁷⁷ SMR, October 1960, 3; October 1963, 2.

¹⁷⁸ SAR, 1972, 2; 1973, 9.

¹⁷⁹ SAR, 1974, 3; 1975, 5; Daniel Kuehn interview, October 11, 2004. Kuehn notes that one movie he showed on those road trips dealt with the "d-2" issue, a movie which raised some ire among the Alaska congressional delegation.

¹⁸⁰ SAR, 1991, 8.

¹⁸¹ SAR, 1993, 6; 1995, 12; 1998, 5; 2002, 11-13, 16; 2003, 9-10; 2004, 7-8; 2005, 5-9; *AK2Day*, May 2, 2002.

¹⁸² "News Update," *Travel Agent* 303 (April 23, 2001), 84; SAR, 2002, 9; 2003, 10.



Chapter Twelve: Natural and Cultural Resource Management

As Chapters 1 and 2 have suggested, the high valleys immediately north of the Alaska Range have been known, for more than a hundred years, because of their superb habitat for mountain sheep, caribou, and other large mammals. Charles Sheldon, who conducted expeditions into the area in 1906 and again in 1907-08, was a naturalist who, in Theodore Roosevelt's words, was primarily interested in studying "the northern mountain sheep." Sheldon, however, was "passionately devoted to all that is beautiful in nature." Thus he not only learned about "the life history of the sheep from the standpoint of its relations with its foes—the wolf, lynx, wolverine, and war eagle"—but he also wrote copious notes about the area's other megafauna along with its birds, small mammals, and plant species.³

Sheldon's enchantment with the area's large mammals is also reflected in the many letters that he wrote in favor of a national park for the area, and his concomitant interest in preserving these animals from extirpation by market hunters. As he noted in a letter to Stephen Mather in December 1915, "The region is a vast reservoir of game: sheep, moose and caribou, bears and the small animals. The building of the railroad will destroy the game for it will be killed to supply the construction camps. The idea of game reservation should also be included." Thomas Riggs of the Alaska Engineering Commission (which was constructing the Seward-to-Fairbanks railroad) gave a "most hearty endorsement" to the park idea. He did not, however, "think that there was much danger of game being killed off in the neighborhood of Mt. McKinley to supply railroad construction camps," and for that reason he stated that "we could take up the idea of game preservation when the idea of the park is thoroughly established."⁴

Congress, however, was more inclined to adopt Sheldon's more protectionist views. The first park bills, which were introduced in April 1916, stated that it was the Interior Secretary's duty to "make and publish ... rules and regulations" that were "primarily aimed at the freest use of the said park for recreation purposes by the public and for the preservation of animals, birds, and fish and for the preservation of the natural curiosities and scenic beauties thereof." The bill also stated that the park was "established as a game refuge, and no person shall kill any game in said park except under an order from the Secretary of the Interior for the protection of persons or

to protect or prevent the extermination of other animals or birds." But the bill also stated that "prospectors and miners engaged in prospecting or mining in said park may take and kill therein so much game or birds as may be needed for their actual necessities when short of food; but in no case shall animals or birds be killed in said park for sale or removal therefrom, or wantonly." The bill also stated that the Secretary could "arrange for the removal of such mature or dead or down timber as he may deem necessary and advisable for the protection and improvement of the park."⁵

As noted in Chapter 2, both the House and Senate made minor changes to the bill over the next several months, but they did not tinker with any of the resource provisions as stated above. Therefore, the bill that President Wilson signed into law provided a mixed message as it pertained to resource preservation; it explicitly called for the "preservation of animals, birds, and fish ... and natural curiosities," but it also stated that recreation needs, plus the subsistence needs of miners and prospectors, also needed to be considered in the park's overall goals.⁶

Natural Resource Management: The Early Years

No active park management took place until June 1921, when newly-appointed superintendent Harry Karstens arrived in the area and commenced his first patrols. According to agency policy—which was still being developed in the five-year-old organization—superintendents were instructed to complete a monthly report of conditions in each park and submit them to the director; that report, moreover, needed to include up-to-date information on the various parks' animal life. After his first patrols into the park, Karstens made the following observations about the park's "wild animals:"

At the forks of some of the streams through which the [proposed] road would run, sheep and caribou mingle in large numbers making a most beautiful sight. The sheep wander down from the higher region in the morning and feed on the bars till well into the after noon then work up again into the rocky cliffs for the night. The caribou wander in most any direction where ever the feed is best. Prospectors who came through the upper passes this spring report having seen large numbers of caribou and sheep mingling



Olaus Murie set up his caribou capture camp in the upper Savage River. Clara Rust Collection, 67-110-500, University of Alaska Fairbanks Archive

together, principally at the head of the Toklat River and between Savage and Sanctuary rivers. Their estimate was far greater than I have ever seen, but I could vouch for at least 600 sheep and 350 to 400 caribou mingling together on the river bar. This of course is in summer when caribou are scattered all over the park in small and large bands. In the winter the herd is much larger; they band up for protection and keep to the lower slopes on the northern boundary of the park.⁵

In his initial reports, Karstens included wildlife information under a bewildering variety of subject categories. But by the end of 1922, his notes on “game” (and, occasionally, “poaching”) gave Washington officials consistent information about park wildlife and the level of its protection. Given the fact that the superintendent had almost the entire burden of park management during his first months on the job, his early wildlife reports were pragmatic rather than scientific. They show

that he was primarily concerned with the park’s sheep and caribou populations: how many there were, their migration patterns, how safe they were from hunters, and their health status. Only occasionally did he make notes about other animals: bears, moose, lynx, or ptarmigan.⁶

The first instance of specific management of the park’s wildlife populations took place in 1921 under the auspices of the U.S. Bureau of Biological Survey (BBS). Agency head Edward W. Nelson, in a letter to Stephen Mather of the NPS, stated that the BBS was “collecting specimens of Alaskan big game for the purpose not only of learning definitely the distribution of the various game animals of North America but to serve as material for the monographic of these animals.” He therefore wanted permission to “collect skulls of mountain sheep, caribou, big bears, and other game animals which [Karstens] may find scattered about in the park where these animals have been killed.” In addition, however, he wanted permission “for Karstens to kill one specimen of large bull caribou each month in the

park for a period of twelve consecutive months ... for the purpose of showing the changes in the pelage which take place and which cause these animals to appear differently colored at different times.” Mather readily acceded to Nelson’s request, and in May 1922 Karstens informed Nelson, “with some relief and pleasure,” that in April he obtained his first specimen, from the Sable Mountain area.⁷ Several more skulls and hides were procured and shipped later that year, and perhaps during 1923 as well; and in July 1923, biologists Adolph and Olaus Murie—acting on Karstens’s instructions—shot a sheep inside the park’s boundaries and hauled it to the McKinley Park railroad depot in order to feed President Harding’s touring party.⁸

A similar, though less lethal, management action took place during this same period, again at the BBS’s behest. In 1920, Nelson had hired Olaus Murie as an “Assistant Biologist and Federal Fur Warden” in order to map the Alaska caribou’s migratory routes, estimate their numbers and study their habits.⁹ Given the major importance of Alaska’s reindeer industry at the time, Nelson in early 1922 asked Murie to find a place where some of the wild caribou could be trapped alive to be transported to the coast of the Bering Sea, where they could be bred with the reindeer of the Eskimo herds in order to improve the reindeer stock. (Dressed reindeer carcasses typically weighed “about 150 pounds each,” while woodland caribou reportedly weighed “between three and four hundred pounds,” and because “there is no question but that they would breed readily and the offspring would be fertile,” Nelson hoped that the capturing program would help “in building up one of the great resources of the Territory.”) Murie felt that the newly-established national park would be a suitable place for the caribou trapping; this was because the Alaska Range (according to Nelson) offered large-sized caribou and because portions of the park were close to the railroad.¹⁰ By June, Murie had written to Karstens, hoping that the two could travel into the park “to look over [the] possibility of capturing young bull caribou.” Murie arrived at the park headquarters on July 3, and in August he and his crew “practically built” the corral at the Savage River’s headwaters.¹¹ Adolph Murie, a recent college graduate, joined his brother as an assistant soon afterward, and the two field biologists spent the next five weeks collecting “some bird and floral specimens” as well as gathering general information on the park’s birds and animals. The following summer, they returned to the park and successfully continued their scientific work. Their caribou-capturing program, however, failed; one source states that the one young bull they caught managed to escape from

them on the way from the Savage River corral to the McKinley Park railroad station, while another source suggests that five caribou made it as far as Fairbanks, although none made it to their intended target along the Bering Sea coast.¹²

Also in 1922, park officials were called on to manage a new action involving reindeer and caribou. Biological Survey officials, on the one hand, had assisted the Western Alaska reindeer industry during the early 1920s; they were, however, reluctant to bring reindeer east into caribou country, fearing that crossbreeding would produce inferior caribou stock. Territorial Bureau of Education William Lopp, however, felt that major new reindeer markets could be realized if a herd could be established along the Alaska Railroad’s right-of-way, so in October 1921, six herders began escorting 1,162 reindeer from Goodnews Bay (in southwestern Alaska) up the Kuskokwim River drainage to the Tonzona River, where they remained throughout the spring and early summer.¹³ Much to the chagrin of both Biological Survey and NPS officials, caribou entered the park in the summer of 1922, and by mid-August a herd numbering 1,600 was “resting just within the [eastern] park boundaries.” A month later, the herd reached its destination in the Broad Pass area southwest of Cantwell.¹⁴ Park officials during this period were doubtless alarmed at the herd’s nearby presence, but given the lack of staff they had no ability to either monitor or control its movements.

Knowledge of, and publicity about, the park’s biological diversity improved substantially over the next few years, primarily due to cooperation between Karstens and Olaus Murie. In the fall of 1924, for example, Karstens began preparing a statement on park game for Murie’s agency that went well beyond his regular monthly updates. Based on that statement, plus Murie’s work dating back to 1922, Murie in late 1925 sent a package of information to Washington on the “flora, fauna, and natural phenomena” of the park. An article extolling the park’s wildlife, based on an August 1925 visit, appeared in the nationally-popular *Saturday Evening Post*.¹⁵ Also, beginning in December 1925, Karstens broadened his zoological coverage—which had previously been based on sheep, caribou, poaching incidents and such animals as had been commonly seen near camps—to include scientific notes on such diverse species as moose, bear, birds, porcupines, fox, and rabbits.¹⁶

Park staff also monitored the health of the various animals they observed. In October 1924, a ranger on a patrol near Cantwell observed a large bull caribou stagger and fall dead, and when he

In 1926 Joseph Dixon and George Wright conducted natural history investigations in Mt. McKinley National Park, identifying 86 species of birds and 25 species of mammals. This photo of a young wandering tattler was one of 350 photographs taken during their 72 days of fieldwork. Joseph Dixon, #5296, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California Berkeley



discovered that his hind leg, hoof, and “whole left side was bloated and swollen,” the situation was considered sufficiently serious that a Washington-based agency official penned a word of warning to his counterpart at the Bureau of Biological Survey.¹⁷ The following summer, a guide reported that “large numbers of park caribou are dying of some disease.” Geologist Stephen Capps, however, quashed the rumor by stating that during his extended wanderings he had observed only six dead animals. No subsequent disease-related deaths, moreover, came to light.¹⁸

During the summer of 1926, the park received its most extensive wildlife survey to date. Joseph Dixon, who had been one of Joseph Grinnell’s students at the University of California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, arrived at the park in mid-May “collecting specimens of this park’s mammal life.” Accompanying the recent graduate was his assistant, George M. Wright, who was still a University of California student. The study, which was financed by John E. Thayer and the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, was done under the NPS’s auspices because Grinnell, according to historian Richard Sellars, “may have been the most consistently vocal advocate for managing the parks on a more scientific basis,” and because the agency, just a year earlier, had established its “Education Division” (which served a natural history function) on the Berkeley campus. Dixon and Wright remained in the park until the end of July and,

according to Karstens, “returned to the States very favorably impressed with the large variety of wild animal and bird life existent here,” and Wright distinguished himself by locating the nest and eggs of the elusive surfbird.¹⁹ Wright, who was independently wealthy, was so impressed by the venture that he joined the Park Service, at Yosemite, and in 1928 he proposed that the NPS undertake a national survey of park fauna using much the same methodology that he and Dixon had employed at Mount McKinley.²⁰

By 1926, the area’s reindeer herd—which had been brought to the Broad Pass area four years earlier—was dwindling. Poor herding practices and wolf predation were partly to blame, but of greater concern to Park Service officials was a tendency for these animals to interbreed with migrating caribou herds. Karstens, by this time, finally had sufficient staff to monitor the various park caribou herds. Because he wanted to “keep the caribou stock free from contamination with reindeer,” he asked his rangers to keep “strict watch ... for stray reindeer ... especially the white reindeer” and to eradicate any reindeer found within the park’s boundaries. Their scrutiny continued through the fall of 1927. So far as is known, park staff neither identified nor shot any reindeer among the park’s caribou herds.²¹

There was also an ongoing threat to the park’s caribou and sheep from miners and prospectors,

The male willow ptarmigan in breeding plumage can be seen in spring. Joseph Dixon took several pages to describe this park resident in his 1938 publication, *Fauna of the National Parks of the United States: Birds & Mammals of Mount McKinley National Park*, Fauna Series No. 3. Adolph Murie Photo, Harpers Ferry Center, NPS



primarily those based in the Kantishna area. As noted in Chapters 2 and 4, the original park bill had explicitly condoned the harvesting of such “game or birds as may be needed for their actual necessities when short of food,” but Karstens and his rangers found it nearly impossible to enforce this provision in the field. The annual number of park animals harvested during the 1920s will never be known, and as late as 1927, Karstens noted that due to extensive patrols, the “illegal slaughter of caribou and mountain sheep was held down to a minimum.” Park officials, however, continued to press for a prohibition of hunting. President Hoover finally signed a hunting provision into law in May 1928, and later that year, NPS officials expressed their gratitude for its passage inasmuch as “much killing was done illegally which could not be controlled.”²²

During the remainder of the 1920s, park staff did their best to monitor the park’s animal populations. Beyond the usual concerns about caribou and sheep, they took note about the park’s fluctuating “snow-shoe rabbit” and ptarmigan numbers; a late-1927 crash in the park’s rabbit

population, which was widely perceived to take place every seven years, brought attempts at an explanation and detailed observations of the crash’s impact on other park animals. A similar concern—unfounded, it turned out—was also expressed about the park’s ptarmigan population.²³ No attempts were made to scientifically tabulate any of the park’s animal species, and estimates from this period are wildly inaccurate, in all probability.²⁴

During the 1930s and early 1940s (see next section), most wildlife-related interest at the park was devoted to wolves, sheep, and caribou. Some attention, however, was also given to rabbits and ptarmigan²⁵ along with occasional notes on unusual observations (initial discoveries or large numbers) of specific mammals (mice, weasels, and black bears) and bird species (seagulls, Canadian geese, etc.).²⁶ Given the agency’s continuing needs to collect and provide wildlife-related information, Superintendent Lick in 1932 appointed David Kaye to be the park’s first ranger-naturalist. This position remained, on either a seasonal or permanent basis, until early 1938, when Lick appointed Aubrey F. Houston as the park’s first wildlife ranger. This position remained until the outbreak of World War II, with its consequent staff reductions; in 1944, the agency’s directorate abolished the “wildlife ranger” designation.²⁷

In June 1928, the park received a major boost when two women—Ynez Mexia accompanied by her assistant, Frances Payne—arrived at the park to collect “wild flowers and plants for the University of California and other institutions.” The 58-year-old Ms. Mexia had been born in Washington, D.C. but had later moved to the Bay



Dr. Aven Nelson and his wife Ruth arrived at McKinley Park on June 23, 1939 and by the end of the summer had collected and pressed over 500 floral specimens. DENA 28-91, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

This grizzly bear was photographed near the Alaska Road Commission cabin and camp at Toklat during the late 1930s when the ARC performed all road maintenance for the park. Beatrice Herning Collection



Area; at age 51, she began taking natural science courses at the university. In 1926 and 1927 she took a botanical expedition to Mexico, where she had identified 50 new plant species, and at the suggestion of Joseph Dixon she took a similar trip to Mount McKinley. Merriam and Payne spent several weeks in the park, collected 6,000 plant specimens, and brought them back to the university's herbarium. Karstens noted that their venture was "the first careful study" of the park's botany.²⁸ Their efforts were supplemented in 1932, when ranger David Kaye amassed a large wildflower collection, and the following summer, when Ella Scott arrived at the park from New York and spent the summer "gathering a collection of wild flowers and plant life." Other early collectors included W. A. Setchell (1932), Fritz Went (1934), and Edith Scammon (1936).²⁹ In 1939, Dr. Aven Nelson (a longtime botany professor at the University of Wyoming) and his wife Ruth Nelson spent the summer "actively engaged in their botanical mission of collecting and cataloguing the plants of the park," and beginning in 1939, Louise Murie assembled a "thorough collection of the park's flora."³⁰

Throughout the prewar period, staff made numerous notes on the effect of human activities on the park's animal populations. As early as 1925, Karstens noted that sheep "seem to be getting more accustomed to the human activities in the park. The great amount of blasting and noise along the park road has not affected them in the least. If anything, they are more tame than ever." Similar comments were echoed the following spring, when he noted that sheep "do not seem to be afraid of visitors and their camera 'guns.'" A driver of a concessioner's vehicle, in fact, noted that "If they get any tamer, they will

be butting our cars off the road." During the winter of 1928-29, ranger Bill Myers noted that he and Fritz Nyberg kept several sheep as pets while staying at the Igloo and Toklat cabins. And in 1933, truck drivers west of Igloo reported that the sheep were "getting so tame that they will hardly move out of the road to let the trucks pass, and often the truck will have to be brought to a complete stop to keep from hitting some of them."³¹ In 1928, park staff observed that various moose "don't seem to pay much attention to cars passing along the highway." In 1940, several wolves were seen feeding from the kitchen waste at the dump adjacent to the ARC camp at Mile 49. Caribou occasionally brushed close to traffic along the park road; in general, however, park staff noted that they "have a wild roving disposition and it is very seldom that you can get within one hundred yards of them."³²

Bears could also be a problem. As noted above, park hunting was sanctioned under certain conditions between 1917 and 1928. During this period, agency staff observed relatively few bears; Karstens seldom noted them in his reports, and George Wright and Joseph Dixon had noted just three bears (a sow and two cubs) during their 72-day visit to the park in 1926.³³ But just a few months after the Congress passed the bill prohibiting hunting in the park, "two or three large grizzlies" showed "no fear of road crews," and "on one occasion, while the crew were eating lunch in the lunch tent, ... a large grizzly coming up the trail headed directly for the tent." The crew, in response, "beat on dish pans and pails. The bear seemed astonished at the noise but not at all frightened." Dixon, during his 1932 sojourn in the park, noted "eighteen grizzly bears and one brown bear in the same area that we covered

in 1926.” That same summer, “five park cabins were ravaged by bruin before he decided to hibernate for the winter.” Rangers, as a result, put new shutters and doors on all twelve of the park’s northern and eastern boundary-line cabins.³⁴ But the problems continued. A bear broke into a Toklat cabin in 1934, and in mid-September 1937 a grizzly bear became so habituated to food at the Mile 29 ARC camp that Supt. Liek was forced to shoot it.³⁵ In 1938, two bears spent “considerable time around the cache” at the East Fork ARC camp, and two years later grizzlies were seen at both Camp Eielson and at the dump adjacent to the Mile 49 ARC camp. Additional cabin break-ins, caused by bears, took place in 1942 and 1944.³⁶

People along the road—park staff, concessions personnel, road crews, and visitors—sometimes played a fairly direct role in managing the park’s animals. Foxes, in particular, were “very tame.” In 1928, a staffer noted that “one red fox has been teasing the dogs at the kennels,” another frequented the Igloo road camp’s garbage dump, and a year later “some of the construction camps had fox so tame that they would eat from your hand.” And for the remainder of the prewar years, such behavior was noticed from time to time at the shelter cabins, road construction camps, and at headquarters.³⁷ The park’s bird life was likewise affected; during the summer of 1929, staff noted that “birds of all kinds are apparently

becoming more numerous each year as more camps are established and as a consequence more feed is thrown out for them.” In 1932, ptarmigan were reported as being “quite tame” near the railroad depot. A 1925 visitor reportedly had “a ground squirrel eating out of his hand and a family of ptarmigan feeding around his feet.” Karstens, commenting on the incident, noted “It is interesting how wild life will respond to those who love them.”³⁸

Under certain circumstances, rangers tried to assist the park’s large mammals. In February 1924, for example, rangers on a patrol just east of the park boundary “observed a caribou which had fallen through the ice about eight feet deep and [was] unable to get out.” In response, the rangers—with Karstens’s permission—“pulled him out, tied his feet together, hauled him to camp on a dog sled and turned him loose in the rear end of the barn.” Karstens offered the animal to the agricultural college in Fairbanks, the offer was accepted, and in early March the caribou was crated up and placed on a northbound train.³⁹ In 1927, ranger Fritz Nyberg rescued a ewe “caught in the deep snows of Sable Pass.” He hauled the animal all the way to headquarters and fed it “milk and soft mash,” but it died six days later. In May 1928, Nyberg “picked up a lamb away from its mother that had only been born a few hours before.” Feeding it with a “bottle and powdered milk,” the lamb lived at Savage Camp for a month

Much like today’s visitors, park guests at Savage Tourist Camp in the 1920s and 1930s were tempted to feed the friendly Arctic ground squirrels. Beatrice Herning Collection





In May 1928, Ranger Lee Swisher and Chief Ranger Fritz Nyberg rescued a recently-born lamb, which they named Minn. They are pictured here bottle feeding the lamb along the trail. Frances Erickson Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

before it “got wet in a glacier stream while overheated and died of pneumonia.”⁴⁰ And in April 1929, the experience of 1924 was repeated, but on a larger scale: at the end of a particularly hard winter, “rangers picked up three rams and three ewes with lamb” near Igloo. A short time later, a “McKinley Parklets” news item reported that the sheep “seem to be getting along alright on Chechoker [sic] grub. They seem to prefer most of all potatoe peeling [sic], flapjacks and tobacco.” To accommodate them, rangers built a “temporary shelter pen” near the Sanctuary cabin, but soon afterward the sheep were moved to headquarters, where they remained until early August. They were shipped north to College, where officials attempted “to cross breed them with domestic sheep and endeavor to produce a sturdy wool bearing sheep that will be able to winter in Alaska.”⁴¹ Efforts to consciously assist the park’s megafauna largely disappeared after the 1920s, although on at least one later occasion, park staff established a salt lick to assist mountain sheep.⁴²

During the 1930s, NPS rangers paid considerable attention to the park’s wolf population (see next section). In 1931, rangers captured three wolves and hauled them to park headquarters, where they were placed in one of the dog kennels. They soon attracted “considerable attention from the tourists.” Supt. Liek hoped “to raise them for breeding purposes” by “crossing them

with malamute dogs.” He doubted, however, “if a satisfactory result can be attained, owing to the wildness and ferocity of the breed.” Nine years later, another wolf arrived at headquarters; the week-old female pup was brought there by biologist Adolph Murie, where it became a “rambunctious play partner” for his six-year-old daughter Gail. The pup, named Wags, remained at headquarters until 1943, when the park staff—having no other choices in the matter—reluctantly shot her.⁴³ Other animals also were brought to headquarters. Rangers, in 1940, also briefly cared for a young golden eagle that had been trapped nearby. It was fed raw meat for several days until it regained its strength and was liberated. Three years later, the presence of thousands of Army troops convinced park staff to bring three young caribou to headquarters. Acting Superintendent Grant Pearson noted that “the calves are well cared for and afford a unique opportunity to many of the boys who are unable to go into the park.” They, too, were freed a short time afterward.⁴⁴

More radical ideas were considered but eventually rejected. In 1928, park officials gave “some thought” to “transferring a few beaver and marten from the west end of the park to the eastern end, where they can be more closely protected and may be seen by the tourists,” but the plan was never implemented. Also rejected was the idea, suggested by agricultural college officials, of using

In order to study wolf behavior more closely, Adolph Murie removed a wolf pup from its den in May 1940. The wolf pup, Wags, was raised in the park by the Murie family, pictured above. Harpers Ferry Center, NPS



the park as a grazing area for either the yak or the galoyak, the latter being a newly-developed hybrid of Galloway cattle and the Tibetan yak. The college, on two occasions during the 1930s, showed an interest in capturing live sheep to take to Fairbanks, but nothing came of these plans.⁴⁵

The management of the park's forests followed general agency guidelines, which prohibited the "cutting of trees except where timber is needed in the construction of buildings or other improvements within the park" or for other specific purposes.⁴⁶ At Mount McKinley, Karstens

told his superiors in Washington that "as there is not much timber within the park boundaries ... the trees will especially have to be protected." Given that scarcity, he and his rangers did their best—through both notices and word of mouth—to tell prospectors, mining claimants, and others to avoid "cutting timber promiscuously. Rangers also tried to keep an eye out for possible insect infestation.⁴⁷

But the greatest threat to the park's timber was fire. In July 1924 a "very large forest fire" raged just east of the Nenana River near the McKinley

In July 1924, a wildland fire threatened the McKinley Station community and the first park headquarters on Riley Creek. During that tense time, all area residents turned out to help save structures in the area. This photograph shows the fire on the hillside beyond the south end of the Riley Creek railroad bridge and approaching the former railroad construction camp. DENA 8-0.5, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



Effects of the 1924 wildland fire can be seen in this 1929 photo taken from the park road, looking toward McKinley Station and the Alaska Railroad bridge on the right. Many of the fire-killed trees adjacent to the park road were cut in the early 1930s. Herbert Heller Collection, 79-44-1316, University of Alaska Fairbanks Archives



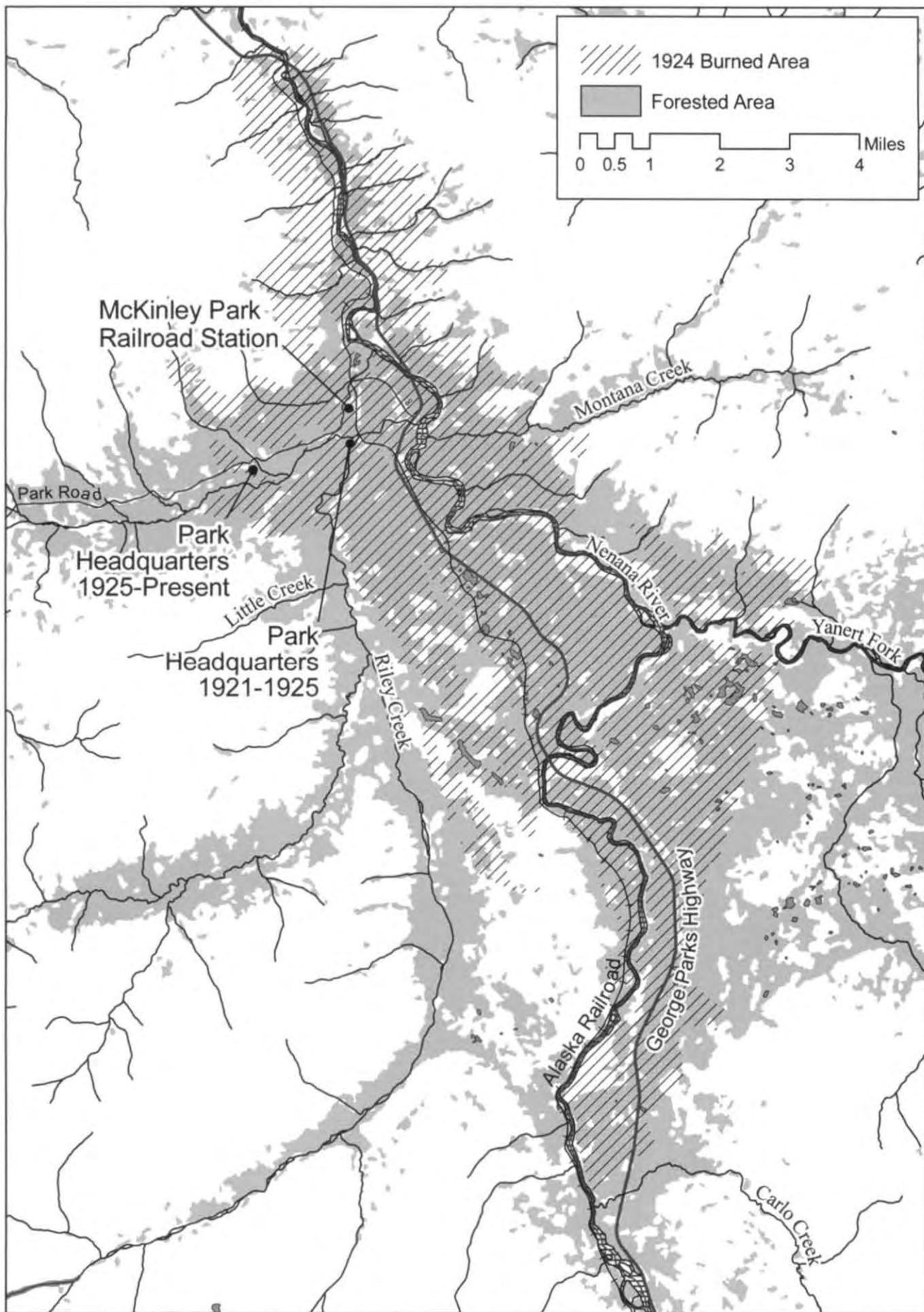
Park railroad depot, and in June 1924 additional fires broke out “in the flats to the north” of the park as well as along the Alaska Railroad right-of-way less than three miles south of the park’s Riley Creek headquarters. In early July 1924, a “large forest fire immediately south of headquarters” forced the park’s three-man staff to spend all day and “long into the night” fighting it. The trio’s efforts, plus the following day’s rain, apparently eliminated the worst of the fire danger. But on July 14, Karstens noted that “the fire south of headquarters has broken out worse than ever,” and for the next six days there was “a continual grind night and day fighting fire.” On July 15, “a raging furnace of flame and smoke” came “within a hundred feet or so of Ranger McFarland’s quarters,” and the following day “the fire came around from the west and jumped Riley and Hines creeks and was raging on all sides of us.” The fire forced the men to move “Horses, Household goods and office out on the bars of Riley creek” for two days. No buildings were lost. But when park staff on July 20 drove west from the railroad depot, they discovered that “the first half mile of country ... is a black scar, completely burned over. The next half mile is burned in patches and is still burning, working in the direction of the Park line and over a large scope of country.” And the Fairbanks press, describing the area surrounding “the entrance to the National Park ... estimated that around 30 square miles have been burned over and but little good timber remains alive.”⁴⁸ (See Map 6.)

Immediately after the fire, park staff redoubled their efforts to remove brush piles and other potential threats. Little was accomplished immediately afterward because of the lack of park staff.

But beginning in the winter of 1929–30, Supt. Liek gave rangers (and later a hired man) the task of “cutting down and clearing up the old dead trees that were along the road leading from the depot to park headquarters.” Clearing out the “unsightly” timber had two purposes: it “present[ed] a much better appearance” to visitors heading up the park road, and it provided park offices and residences with a ready supply of firewood. After the 1924 fire, park staff reported no further wildfires for years afterward.⁴⁹

Predator Control and the Emergence of the Wolf-Sheep Controversy⁵⁰

Throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, Americans in general—and Alaskans in particular—were firm believers in predator control. Prior to 1900, as the tides of settlement surged westward, there was a societal emphasis on the elimination of any species that impeded crop cultivation or ranching pursuits, and during the early twentieth century, public attention was increasingly directed toward the preservation of the major species that captured the interests of sport hunters. Americans thus targeted a number of species over the years, and perhaps the most public campaigns were directed against wolves, coyotes, bears, “chicken hawks” and other raptors, plus beavers, rabbits, and prairie dogs.⁵¹ For wolves, and perhaps for other species as well, state and territorial governments assisted these efforts by offering bounties to successful hunters.⁵² In the lower 48 states, the vehemence in public attitudes against predators had waned somewhat by the 1920s, due in part to a rise in conservationist sentiment, and in addition because wolves and other predators were declining in numbers and thus causing less of an impact to more economically-



Map 6. Area Burned by the July 1924 Forest Fire

beneficial plants and animals. Federal government agencies, however, were still ardent defenders of predator control in all its forms, and the Bureau of Biological Survey—the primary agency which carried out those policies—championed predator control because of its popularity among western residents and legislators.⁵³

In Alaska, traditional attitudes toward predators were in full flower well into the twentieth century, primarily because most residents, Native and non-Native alike, depended heavily on local game and fish species for their everyday diet. In order to ensure a plentiful, ongoing supply of these products, the Alaska Legislature—which was established as a result of a 1912 Congressional act—provided bounties for wolves beginning in 1915. But despite the bounty, which was raised in 1917 from \$10 to \$15, Alaska Governor Thomas Riggs in 1919 noted that wolves were “becoming a great menace to game,” and during the mid-1920s, Governor George Parks stated that wolf numbers were “increasing in spite of the bounty [and] doing much damage to fur and game.” Wolves, more specifically, were perceived by Alaskans as having a major, negative impact on Western Alaska reindeer herds, although scientific evidence for this relationship has not been established. Coyotes, which had long been perceived as a threat to game populations, became a bounty target beginning in 1929. Other species, such as the bald eagle, hair seal, and various trout species were thought to threaten Alaska’s commercially-valuable salmon industry, so the territorial legislature slapped bounties on these species in 1917, 1927, and 1931, respectively.⁵⁴

The fact that Mount McKinley National Park, established in early 1917, was under National Park Service jurisdiction provided little protection for wolves, coyotes, and other non-game animals. Although the so-called “Lane letter” of May 1918 stated that “the national parks must be maintained in absolutely unimpaired form for the use of future generations,” it gave no specific direction on animal management save hunting and sheep grazing (both of which would not be permitted) and cattle grazing (which was prohibited only at Yellowstone).⁵⁵ But because NPS managers such as Stephen Mather and Horace Albright recognized “the public appeal of visible wildlife” (according to historian Timothy Rawson), they likewise decided that “predators did not receive protection in national parks.” Despite Director Mather’s admonition that “it is contrary to the policy of the Service to exterminate any species native to a park area,” wolves during the 1920s were eliminated from many of the major western parks including Crater Lake, Grand Canyon, Mount Rainier, Rocky Mountain, Sequoia, and Yosemite, and they were effectively eliminated at Glacier and Yellowstone.⁵⁶

The Bureau of Biological Survey played a key role in these eradication efforts, several of which were instigated to protect livestock and hunting ranges in adjacent areas. But at Yellowstone and Grand Canyon, and perhaps elsewhere, predator control backfired. At Yellowstone, managers had to contend with an overabundance of elk, antelope and bison; huge elk dieoffs resulted, and the agency eventually chose to ship excess animals to nearby areas and to institute a feeding program. At Grand Canyon and in the surrounding national forest, the overabundance of Kaibab deer forced officials to learn “the greatest lesson of their lives” in animal mismanagement; a massive dieoff was followed by extended public hand-wringing on how to proceed and a controversial government-sanctioned deer hunt.⁵⁷

As noted above, Mount McKinley National Park was established as a game refuge, but as in other western parks, that status provided no protection for predators. And proposals to reduce the number of predators were not long in coming. During the summer and fall of 1922, Superintendent Karstens made the first such suggestion; noting that “porcupine are very thick throughout the park and ... are chewing the bark off large numbers of trees and thereby killing them,” he recommended exterminating them. In 1926 and again in 1927, Karstens complained that porcupines had “ruined acres of spruce trees,” and after a particularly ugly encounter with the park dogs, he vowed that “porcupine have now been declared outlaws and ‘open season’ exists on them.” But park staff, acting on orders from Washington, killed none of these animals.⁵⁸

Beginning in September 1925, wolves—which had been “extremely scarce” in the park prior to that time—began to appear in greater numbers. Karstens, upon hearing reports about wolves in the park, immediately contacted his superiors and broached the idea of killing “some of them.” Wolves were not the only worrisome animals that year; two coyotes were also spotted, causing Karstens to comment, “It is hoped that these animals do not get a hold on this country.” He further noted that

it is to be feared that eventually those present in the hills will breed and will become a menace to travelers. A strict watch will be kept and the killing of both coyotes and wolves will be kept in abeyance until such a time as they become dangerous – then a drastic action will be taken by all concerned.⁵⁹



Winter patrols by dog team were regularly conducted in the park by rangers to observe wildlife activities, resource conditions and any indication of illegal hunting activities. This patrol was traveling on the East Fork of the Toklat River in 1929. DENA 3880, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

These animals continued to spread, and in 1928 a concerned Karstens noted that “since 1927 wolves are becoming alarmingly plentiful and causing considerable havoc among our game, also the coyote is multiplying fast.” At the head of the Savage River, where the concessioner had a small camp for “Big Game Drive” patrons, he remarked that wolves were “actually driving the game out ... If something is not done to curb the wolf, our game is going to suffer tremendously.” Managers during the late 1920s expressed some worries about the destructive impacts of lynx and wolverines.⁶⁰ Most of their concern, however, was directed toward wolves. The Bureau of Biological Survey, in 1927, helped organize a multi-agency effort to kill Alaska wolves. The following year the agency’s head, Paul Redington, visited the park, after which he wrote a follow-up report stating that wolves had scattered the Dall sheep population to the point that it was “more and more difficult for tourists to observe them.” He then asked the NPS to contribute \$5,000 to aid in territorial wolf control efforts. Acting Director Arthur Demaray, the person to whom Redington’s report was directed, had no philosophical qualms with the report, but he offered the BBS no funds, probably because wolf depredations did not constitute a crisis. A similar BBS request, sent in 1929, elicited the same negative response. Despite the NPS’s reluctance, the BBS hired a wolf trapper and four assistants, who plied their craft during 1929 and 1930. But perhaps because of Demaray’s lack of enthusi-

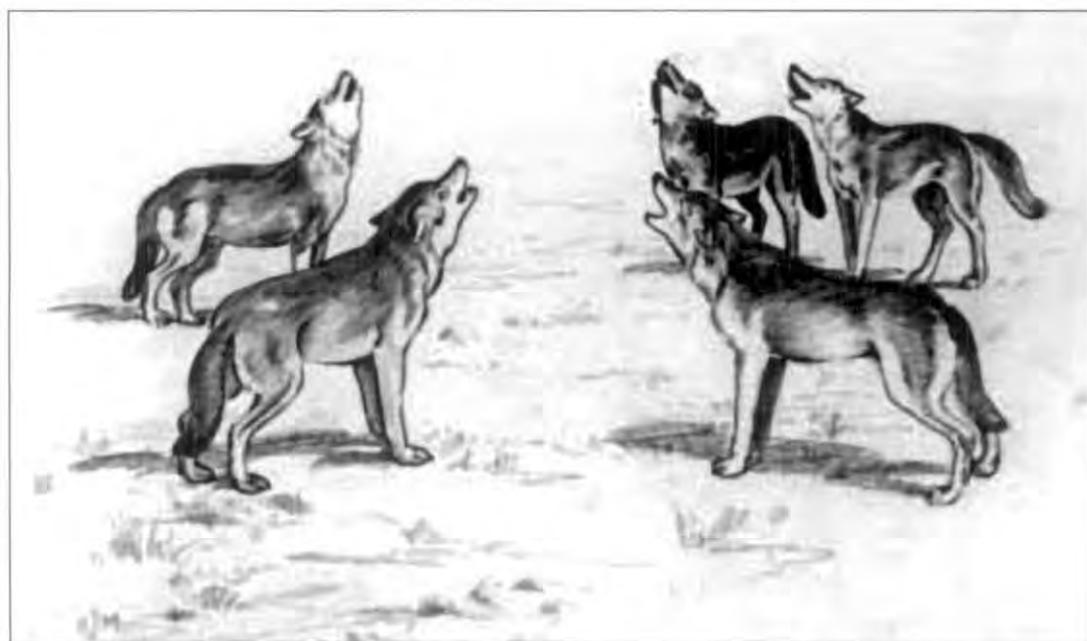
asm for the project, none of the trappers set foot within Mount McKinley National Park during either of these years.⁶¹

Redington wrote to NPS officials again in March 1932. Stating that “wolves and other animals” were “destroying the beneficial wild life of the Park,” he again offered the BBS’s assistance in the matter. By this time, ten or more wolves had been killed in the park; some by concessions employees, others by NPS staff.⁶² Inasmuch as the park’s sheep population was in the midst of its second destructive winter in four years—winters in which many sheep deaths were blamed on wolves—local NPS staff would no doubt have welcomed the BBS’s assistance.⁶³ But new currents of thinking were making themselves heard by this time. In 1916, Joseph Grinnell had published a then-daring paper in which he declared that “predaceous animals should be left unmolested and allowed to retain their primitive relation to the rest of the fauna.” By 1924, several prominent members of the American Society of Mammalogists were also going on record about the scientific value of predators, and the organization passed a resolution condemning the indiscriminate poisoning of predators. Gradually, NPS officials began to listen to the scientists; the agency banned steel traps in 1928 and poisons in 1930, and in May 1931 an agencywide policy—signed by Director Horace Albright—stated that “predatory animals are to be considered an

integral part of the wild life protected within national parks and no widespread campaigns of destruction are to be countenanced.”⁶⁴

Albright’s policy statement, however, did not necessarily translate into specific park policy (historian Richard Sellars notes that it “reflected pressure from outside the Service”), and as late as 1929 Albright had written that wolves were “rapidly increasing in northern Alaska ... and overrunning Mt. McKinley Park,” a state of affairs that diminished the health of “species of animals desirable for public observation and enjoyment.”⁶⁵ In July 1931—just two months after the predator policy was issued—Albright arrived at the park and learned that the wolves were not threatening the park’s sheep population. Despite that assessment, he backed Supt. Liek’s dictum of having park rangers kill wolves on sight; in his annual report, however, Liek diplomatically noted that rangers were “watching this situation carefully and control measures will be taken as necessary.” The NPS, as before, did not invite BBS personnel into the park for wolf control purposes.⁶⁶

McKinley-specific information in these reports were primarily limited to Dixon’s observations from 1926, but based on Dixon’s new findings in 1932, he wrote a new volume (published in 1938) devoted solely to Mount McKinley’s fauna. Much of what Dixon gathered in 1932 was a general description of park animals and habitat.⁶⁸ But given the wildlife losses that the park had incurred during the winter of 1931–32, Dixon—who was often accompanied by park ranger David Kaye—spent “much time studying conditions among the wild animals with the view of determining the cause for our great losses in sheep,” and more particularly whether “this loss was caused by the predatory animals or the deep snows.” Dixon, during the late 1920s, had spoken out against the agency’s wolf control policies, and in addition, he stated that “there are probably no wolves today in the National Parks of the United States outside of Alaska. The loss is lamentable and there is little likelihood that it can be remedied.” Even so, he apparently had little interest in overturning current rules at Mount McKinley. The pragmatic Dixon noted that the wolf’s importance was “thoroughly appreciated by the



Adolph Murie, in *The Wolves of Mount McKinley*, noted that wolves howled in a group before departing from the den for hunting. His brother, Olaus, produced this sketch to illustrate the behavior. Olaus Murie, Harpers Ferry Center/NPS

On the heels of Albright’s visit—and perhaps as a result of the director’s concerns—Joseph Dixon returned to the park in 1932 and spent two and a half months on a wildlife survey.⁶⁷ Dixon, as noted above, had visited the park in 1926 with George Wright. In 1928, Wright had convinced NPS leaders that a survey should be undertaken of fauna in all of the country’s national parks. Soon afterward, Wright hired Dixon for the massive project, and fieldwork had begun in 1930. The findings of their work first appeared in publications dated 1933 to 1935; Mount

NPS, even though the necessity of some control ... was admitted on the basis that the mountain sheep of the park were in need of relief.” And as Superintendent Liek noted in June 1932 during Dixon’s visit to the park, “Mr. Dixon has suggested that the rangers make a little more effort to kill off some of the wolves and coyotes.”⁶⁹

The big sheep die-off that took place during the winter of 1931–32, and the rising tenor of predator-based debate that loomed as a result, brought about an increasingly narrow focus that agency

April 1929 was a very hard month for sheep as a result of heavy snows and few places blown clear of snow. Sheep ranged onto the flats and many starved. Near Igloo Creek rangers on patrol picked up five exhausted, starving sheep and took them to park headquarters for rehabilitation, shown here in June 1929. Peggy Talerio Collection



staff paid to sheep, caribou, and wolves at the expense of other animal species. In March 1930, rangers had taken an informal census of nine animal species; beginning with the most common, they tabulated the number of caribou, sheep, ptarmigan, foxes, moose, wolves, porcupines, wolverines, and coyotes. In late 1931, however, they counted only four species (sheep, moose, wolves, and foxes, although it was also noted that “ptarmigan are returning to the park in great numbers”).⁷⁰ After the winter’s sheep disaster, agency staff continued to make an annual census, and in 1934 the NPS teamed with the Alaska Game Commission to conduct the park’s first aerial wildlife census. Most counts after 1931 were limited to sheep, wolf, and caribou populations, although efforts in both 1936 and 1938 resulted in tallies for five of the park’s most prominent mammal species.⁷¹

NPS Assistant Director Harold Bryant, who was in charge of the agency’s wildlife policies, made it known in March 1932 that he wanted the agency’s new (1931) predator policy carried out at Mount McKinley National Park. This meant a cessation of all wolf control efforts. He and Albright carried on a spirited correspondence over the issue, which ceased only when Albright stepped down as the NPS chief in August 1933 and was replaced by Arno Cammerer. Throughout this period, rangers and other government personnel continued to hunt down wolves: at least 2 in 1932, 9 in 1933, and 3 in 1934. Altogether, 24 park wolves were reportedly killed between 1929 and 1934.⁷²

On February 25, 1935, Cammerer—apparently acceding to ideas that Bryant and others in the scientific community had long been advocating—issued a new park-specific predator policy.

“Effective this date,” he noted, “the killing of wolves within the park area is prohibited.”⁷³

Cammerer’s ruling put agency policy at the park squarely against the anti-predator attitudes which prevailed in Alaska, an attitude that, on an official level, had been expressed two years earlier in a legislative memorial that requested “that the Federal Government take steps to control the breeding and propagation of predatory animals” in the park. And on an unofficial level, territorial attitudes toward wolves were encapsulated by a photo caption in the first (January 1935) issue of the *Alaska Sportsman*: “A dead wolf is a good wolf.”⁷⁴ Park staff, moreover, was as dead-set against Cammerer’s policy as other Alaskans. Supt. Liek, in 1935, had just participated in the first in a series of annual animal censuses; these consistently showed that at least 15,000 caribou and 3,000 sheep inhabited the park, as opposed to a wolf population of less than 80. Despite those disproportionate numbers, however, both Liek and his rangers made no attempt to hide their antipathy toward wolves; they made drastic reports that the park was “infested” with wolves, which were becoming “a menace to the sheep.” They dutifully refrained from any wolf harvesting, however.⁷⁵

Toward the end of 1936, the pendulum of the Park Service’s policy toward wolves at the park swayed back toward its earlier (pre-1935) position. In June of that year, Assistant Director Arthur Demaray arrived at the park as part of a month-long Alaska sojourn. That visit, however, exposed him to the depth of local opinion on the wolf-control issue, so in late August, after he returned to Washington, he issued a new policy that gave rangers permission—for research purposes—to “kill a moderate number” of wolves.⁷⁶

Given that dictum, Liek assigned specific rangers in both 1937 and 1938 to undertake “predatory animal control” tasks. Rangers killed a total of fourteen wolves after the ban was lifted: one in 1936, three in 1937, and ten in 1938.⁷⁷

Wolf Management: the Role of Science, Congress, and Advocacy Groups

The NPS, during this time, was torn in its attitudes toward predators. The agency, following its 1931 policy statement, prohibited coyote control at Yellowstone at about the same time that it stopped wolf control at Mount McKinley. But in response to those decisions, it was attacked by a host of advocacy groups: cattlemen’s associations, sportsman’s groups, the Camp Fire Club, and others. Also weighing in on the issue was former director Horace Albright, who wrote impassioned letters to Cammerer questioning the agency’s policies toward coyotes and wolves. The NPS director, in response, sought help from the scientific community. In the spring of 1937, Adolph Murie—who was once again with the U.S. Bureau of Biological Survey—initiated a study of Yellowstone’s coyotes. Murie’s research concluded that because coyotes had a “negligible” effect on the park’s elk populations, the park’s flora and fauna should be subjected to “minimal disturbance,” and more specifically that coyote control was “not advisable under present conditions.” Cammerer backed Murie and resisted further control efforts because, as he noted, the coyote was a “natural and desirable component of the primitive biotic picture.”⁷⁸

As early as 1936, Murie had expressed an interest in returning to Alaska and conducting a similar study on the Mount McKinley National Park wolf population. Funding, however, was a problem, and by January 1939 Cammerer had written to the Camp Fire Club and asked if it would be willing to fund a year-long research project. The Club turned him down, so soon afterward, agency officials recognized the need to “solve its own wildlife problems and thus avoid pressure for control measures by other agencies.” After first considering Joseph Dixon for the job (who opted out for medical reasons), they asked Murie to undertake “a study of predators and their relation to other [park] wildlife” as soon as he completed his work at Yellowstone. He eagerly accepted and left Jackson, Wyoming, for Alaska in March 1939. He sailed north with a contingent of Civilian Conservation Corps workers that were bound for the park, and by April 17 he was comfortably sequestered at the park’s Sanctuary River ranger cabin.⁷⁹

Murie, who was officially on loan between the NPS’s Region II and Region IV (these were later



known as the Rocky Mountain Region and the Western Region, respectively), had been appointed to the park only for a seven-month assignment, so he wasted no time beginning his work, which specifically involved locating and analyzing sheep skulls. By the end of June, park officials were able to report “very satisfactory progress in his study ... he states that indications point to a favorable report to support the NPS policy of protecting all species of native animals. However, it is too early to make commitments.”⁸⁰ Murie got a significant boost shortly after he arrived, because Supt. Liek—whose tenure went back to the late 1920s and whose support of predators ranged from lukewarm to hostile—was replaced by Frank Been, a forestry-school graduate and former Sequoia National Park naturalist. In late July, an approving Murie wrote that “Been’s attitude toward the [predator] problem is in accord” with his own. Been asked Murie to remain at the park until late that fall, and he asked his superiors in Washington to fund the biologist for “several years of observations” because of “the agitation of the people toward wolves and because the conclusions here will be a guide for solving problems in other parks of the territory.” When he left the park that fall, he was uncertain whether he would return. He soon learned, however, that thanks to the support of both Cammerer and officials in the BBS’s reorganized Wildlife Division, there were now new principles

Wildlife Biologist Adolph Murie began his investigations of predator-prey relationships in Mt. McKinley National Park in April 1939, based at the Sanctuary River ranger cabin. DENA 28-11, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

of park wildlife management. These stated that “every species shall be left to carry on its struggle for existence unaided,” and predators would not be killed unless a prey species was threatened with extermination.⁸¹

Murie’s primary research interest was establishing a cause for the park sheep mortality and to ascertain a causal link, if any, between sheep mortality and predators. Murie, as a result of that research, quickly dismissed most predators (such



During his early work Adolph Murie, left, along with Ranger John Rumohr, were photographed here by Harold Herring on the Muldrow Glacier during their extensive hiking field surveys. Beatrice Herring Collection

NPS officials, after a winter of stalling, finally agreed in early April 1940 to send Murie back to the park for further research; he and his family quickly headed west to Seattle, and by April 28 they were “already established at a cabin on the East Fork of the Toklat River.” He soon joined Frank Glaser, a BBS “predator hunter,” and park ranger Harold Herring on a census of wolves and wolf dens in the park. In May, Glaser located three dens containing wolf pups, and by the end of the month, six park wolves had been killed “for specimens and for control.”⁸² Glaser finished his inventory in July and left the park, and in October he issued a report on his work. Ranger Herring, however, issued a separate report during the same month, and as Been candidly noted, “The divergence of interpretation of the two men is interesting.” Murie, meanwhile, spent most of the summer observing (and occasionally filming) wolves and wolf behavior, interviewing longtime trappers and hunters, collecting sheep skulls, and analyzing wolf scat. Murie and his family (who adopted a week-old wolf puppy, which they named Wags) retreated to park headquarters that fall, but resumed work at the East Fork cabin the following May. By August 1941 his work was complete, and the family left the park.⁸³

as coyotes, lynx, bears, wolverines, or golden eagles) as being responsible for significant sheep losses. Far more significant contributors were environmental stressors such as snowpack and disease. Wolves, he freely admitted, were “the chief factor limiting the sheep population” in the park, but they did so by harvesting the old, the young, and the sick. But wolves, as a species, were no threat to the overall health of the park’s sheep population. Murie, working out of his Jackson home, completed his manuscript in early 1942, but given the country’s abrupt entrance into World War II, Murie’s research remained in draft form until 1944, when the Government Printing Office published it as *The Wolves of Mount McKinley*. Included with the text were a number of Olaus Murie’s sketches.⁸⁴

Throughout this period, opposition to the Park Service’s *laissez faire* wildlife philosophy remained strong, and particularly so in Alaska. Numerous articles, both in sportsman’s magazines and Alaska newspapers, chanted that the park was a “breeding ground” for wolves and coyotes, while overlooking the fact that the park also bred caribou, sheep, and other game animals. According to Murie, “the wolf controversy is in the nature of a religion with many and



Frank Glaser, a U. S. Biological Survey predator control agent, worked in the park with wildlife biologist Adolph Murie and park ranger Harold Herring to conduct a census of wolves and wolf dens in 1940. Glaser worked with Olaus Murie on the caribou capture project in 1922 and 1923, and later was a trapper on the lower Savage River, north of the park boundary, for more than 10 years. Beatrice Herring Collection

therefore can not be won by logic or fact.” But Been, Murie, and others did what they could. They spoke to business, civic, and sportsman’s groups in Fairbanks, made a presentation at an Alaska Game Commission meeting, greeted VIPs during their park visits, assigned rangers to accompany bus tours and give natural-science talks, showed Murie’s wildlife films, and carried on correspondence with those who published anti-wolf articles. By doing so they won many converts, but due to the sheer scale of those with opposing viewpoints, both men recognized the folly in trying to either implement or retain an absolute ban on wolf control.⁸⁵ Been, therefore, made it known that rangers still shot wolves from time to time; and as a result, wolves did not enjoy complete protection at the park. Rangers, in fact, killed one wolf in 1941 and another in 1944; more wolves would doubtless have been killed if the ranger ranks during the war had not been so depleted (see Chapter 5).⁸⁶

During World War II, Alaskans became even more antithetical toward wolves than they had previously, a condition brought on by a loss of long-term hunters to the war effort, a flood of new (and untutored) hunters from the United States, the decimation of the Western Alaska reindeer herds, and poor Interior game harvests. Looking for a way to vent their frustration, the territorial legislature in mid-March 1945 passed a joint memorial blaming the Park Service for Alaska’s wildlife woes. The memori-

al stated that “wolves and coyotes have already caused reindeer to decrease from about 641,000 to 90,000 since 1932;” the chief culprit for the crash, furthermore, was the NPS, which was “breeding these destructive creatures in great refuges.” The memorial, which was in some ways similar to what had been passed in 1933 and 1935, asked Congress to remove all restrictions to wolf hunting in parks and to fund an aerial hunting program.⁸⁷

Grant Pearson, who had been Mount McKinley’s acting superintendent since Been’s departure in early 1943, was called on to rebut the legislature’s charges. His superiors told him to cease all wolf-control efforts because of the lack of staff; Pearson, however, had a traditional attitude toward wolves, and being a longtime local resident, his best defense was to suggest that out-of-state interests were responsible for the agency’s wolf policy.

Other Interior Department officials, who were well aware of the virulence of local opinion on the issue, continued to recommend that NPS regulations pertaining to wolves should be interpreted less strictly at Mount McKinley than in stateside parks. An Indian Service biologist stated that Alaskans were “in virtual mutiny against” NPS policies, Murie stated that “Alaskans would howl more than the wolves” if a ban were laid down, and NPS Regional Director Owen Tomlinson stated that an annual harvest

In addition to his wolf studies, Adolph Murie also studied Dall sheep behavior. He photographed this band of ewes with lambs crossing a small stream in Mt. McKinley National Park. Adolph Murie, Harpers Ferry Center



of three to five wolves would be sufficient to quiet Alaskan concerns without diminishing the park's wolf population. Pearson himself, who had been the focus of so much criticism, warned his superiors that "nothing short of extreme measures will regain the good will and confidence of Alaskans." Otherwise, Congressional action was sure to follow.⁸⁸

Washington-based NPS officials, well aware of the growing fervor against the park's wolf control policy, asked Murie—who was then working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Arizona—to return to Alaska and conduct a brief sheep inventory. He stayed in the park from mid-August to mid-September 1945. During his quick reconnaissance, he concluded that the park's sheep population had drastically declined, to the point that their continued existence could be in jeopardy. He therefore recommended—perhaps for entirely political reasons—that rangers should kill from ten to fifteen wolves, with continued control until the sheep population regained its former strength. NPS Director Newton Drury accepted Murie's recommendation "without question," and a news release explaining the new park policy was released on October 31. Three months later, the agency issued a second release, stating that it had authorized "an experienced trapper under the direction of the superintendent" to trap 15 park wolves.⁸⁹

But the Camp Fire Club, whose roots at the park extended back to the pre-World War I days, was not mollified by the Park Service's action. Led by Belmore Browne, who had made three attempts to climb Mount McKinley, all prior to the park's establishment, the club called the agency's philosophy a "fallacious doctrine" and Murie's book "An Eulogy to the Wolf." Browne, furthermore, had played a key role in establishing the park, and vowed that the park's creators never intended to protect wolves as part of the park's "game refuge" concept. Soon afterward, Camp Fire Club advocates opted for a Congressional resolution of the matter, and on December 14, Rep. Homer Angell (R-Ore.) introduced a bill calling for the "rigid control of wolves and other predatory animals" in the park "to the end that said [game] refuge be made safe, and so maintained, for the Dall sheep, caribou, and other wildlife native to the area." Angell submitted a slightly revised bill the following February, and in March 1946, Wallace White (R-Maine) introduced a similar bill in the Senate.⁹⁰

The House's Interior Committee on Public Lands held two hearings on Angell's revised bill, on April 3 and May 22. The first hearing, hastily arranged, was dominated by Camp Fire Club representatives, and the only speaker with an opposing viewpoint was Devereux Butcher from the National Parks Association. At the second hearing, Director Drury was able to refute a number

of points made by previous speakers, and after the meeting concluded, the committee tabled the bill for the year because its members concluded that, in most cases, agencies (which possessed the expertise) rather than Congress (which didn't) should be free to decide agency-specific wildlife management issues.⁹¹

With the looming specter of Congressional interference now removed, rangers at Mount McKinley National Park were now free to follow Drury's October 1945 dictum and conduct small-scale wolf harvesting. Pearson begged off at first, citing budgetary woes, but in February 1946 the Service hired John A. Colvin, an "experienced wolf hunter." Colvin, working out of the Sanctuary cabin and armed with both traps and a rifle, began searching for wolves. He had scant success, however, and on April 2 he left the park after concluding that there were not sufficient wolves in the Park to warrant the expense of hunting them.⁹²

During the summer of 1946, however, caribou migrated back into the park, and with them came wolves. Rangers, following Drury's policy, harvested five wolves between July and October. Murie, hoping to lend some science to the continuing debate, stayed at the park during August and September and concluded that the park still contained only about five hundred sheep, and the wolf population was only about fifteen. Despite those low numbers, Murie recommended a continuation of the agency's wolf-control program. But zealots in the Camp Fire Club, who wanted to preserve the park's sheep at all costs, tried once again to change the agency's policy through legislation. In March 1947, both Senator White and Rep. Arthur Miller (R-Nebr.) introduced bills that largely repeated those that had been seen and debated between December 1945 and May 1946. But this time around, the Camp Fire Club found few allies, and neither bill received a hearing.⁹³

The agency, meanwhile, continued to monitor the park's wolf and sheep populations, primarily through the efforts of Dr. Murie—now an NPS employee—who stayed at the park for most of 1947 and many succeeding years as well. Park staff, during this period, continued their wolf control campaign, and in 1948 they harvested seven wolves. Been, hoping to quell negative publicity about the agency's policy, displayed four of these wolves—all of them killed in February—to a group of labor delegates convened at the park hotel.⁹⁴ And in August 1948 agency staff, wolf-control advocates, and defenders of the agency's policies gathered at the park and engaged in a vigorous, drawn-out debate. The

idea, fostered by NPS Director Newton Drury, brought together Belmore Browne of the Camp Fire Club, who had last visited central Alaska in 1912; Harold Anthony, who was a member of both the Boone and Crockett Club and the NPS Advisory Board; Ralph Friedman, a New York businessman and big-game hunter; NPS biologist Adolph Murie; and park superintendent Frank Been. The men spent ten days together walking, hiking, riding up and down the park road, and conversing. Just a few hours before the three visitors were to depart, Been produced a joint statement that he hoped all would be able to sign. After several hours of debate, all five "reluctantly" signed a final draft stating, among other provisions, that the agency's wolf control program would continue, at least for the short term; that the NPS policies were not to blame for the reduced sheep population; that predator control legislation was a dangerous precedent; that the continuing services of a biologist were needed to monitor park wildlife; and that the public needed to be further educated about the park's predator situation. All three visitors submitted lengthy evaluations of their sojourn at the park, and based on those reports, Drury—primarily as a public relations gesture—decided in January 1949 to remove any limits on the number of park wolves to be harvested.⁹⁵

Shortly after Drury's decision, Been was transferred to a position in Oregon and was replaced by Grant Pearson, who had been working in the park for most of the last twenty-three years. Pearson, a longtime predator-control advocate, wanted all of his rangers involved in the wolf reduction effort, but a more cautious Murie (in the words of historian Tim Rawson) wanted "to be selective about which wolves would be sacrificed to the politics of wildlife management." During the winter of 1949-50, one park wolf was killed, and another (near Igloo Creek) was seen dragging a trap. But in later years, park staff targeted only a small part of the park for wolf harvesting. Wolves in the hotel and headquarters areas, specifically, could be harvested, but no efforts were made to cull wolves in the Toklat drainage or elsewhere in the park's interior.⁹⁶ To that end, traps were placed near the park dump (which was located just east of the McKinley Park airstrip) during the winter months, and as a result, most of the eleven wolves that were caught and killed between 1949 and 1952 fell victim to snares at the park dump.⁹⁷

Events both inside and outside of the park's boundaries conspired to eliminate the need, and reduce the political pressure, for further wolf control. The park's caribou herds typically wintered on grounds north of the park, and the



In order to comply with the mandated wolf control program, park rangers placed snares at the park dump in 1951 and caught three young wolves, one of which is pictured above with ranger Bill Nancarrow. The pelts from these wolves were utilized for interpretation at the park museum. DENA 18-11, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

wolves, who followed them, often fell victim to poison bait that was scattered about by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agents. In addition, the park's sheep numbers began to rebound, from a 1945-46 population of 500 to an estimated 1,200 in 1951. And on a political level, Camp Fire Club activist Marshall McLean died in 1952, and Belmore Browne followed soon afterward.⁹⁸

The circumstances that ended the agency's wolf control efforts at the park were brought about by a request from a husband-and-wife film crew. Herb and Lois Crisler, who worked for Walt Disney Productions, wanted to make a film showing the home life of a wolf family, so they asked the NPS for permission to film a wolf den in the park. Pearson was cool to the idea and claimed that there had been no known wolf dens in the park since 1946. But the new NPS director, Conrad Wirth, overruled Pearson. He stated, in a February 1953 memo, that because the park's sheep were no longer threatened, the couple was free to proceed with their film project; and to assist the filmmakers, he enacted a temporary ban on wolf control. Later that year, Murie tallied at least 1,500 sheep and an increasing number of caribou migrating into the park. So given the expanding numbers of park game animals, Wirth in March 1954 decided that wolf control in the

park would "be suspended immediately and until change in the relationship of the wolf and its prey species makes resumption of control advisable."⁹⁹ Few public protests followed Wirth's decision, the park's game populations remained healthy in the years following the decision, and since that time, agitation for wolf control has not been resurrected as a serious threat to NPS policy.

The Growing Popularity of Fishing

Congress, when it established Mount McKinley National Park, drew boundaries that encompassed the high peaks of the Alaska Range and the rich wildlife habitat immediately to the north. Despite language in the park bill calling for the "preservation of animals, birds, and fish," little if any information has surfaced in hearings or correspondence to suggest that fish populations within the proposed park boundary were either well known or highly valued. Karstens, a longtime resident of interior Alaska, was doubtless well aware of the area's primary fish species, but his knowledge of the fish habitat patterns within the park boundaries was probably fairly limited.

Karstens began a staff presence in 1921, and by 1923 he had gained both rangers and a concessioner. These individuals, plus the trappers and prospectors who had inhabited the area

since the earliest years of the twentieth century, collectively had considerable knowledge of the best local fishing holes. But George Wright and Joseph Dixon, during their 1926 biological study, made no mention of the park's fish populations. To provide additional knowledge, Karstens in August 1927 headed out on a month-long patrol, one object of which was to locate the park's "good fishing streams or lakes and the species of fish to be caught." That trip took him westward to Copper Mountain, and later down the Clearwater Creek drainage. He returned from that trip stating that the park offered grayling and Dolly Varden trout. Grayling, measuring from 5 to 14 inches long, were plentiful ("as many as 200 have been seen in a small hole") and were found in most of the clear water streams, while some streams carried Dolly Varden, the larger sizes of this species invariably being found near the headwaters. One of the richest grayling pools was located at the northern end of Savage River Canyon, and to ease access to the site a trail was constructed there from the park road in 1928.¹⁰⁰

This group of Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees were quite successful at fishing in Wonder Lake. John Ehly Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve



One of the park's first information circulars, published in 1929, stated that there were no park-specific fishing regulations; here, as in most other NPS units, only hook-and-line fishing was allowed, and fish could not be harvested "for merchandise or profit." It offered the following descriptive information:

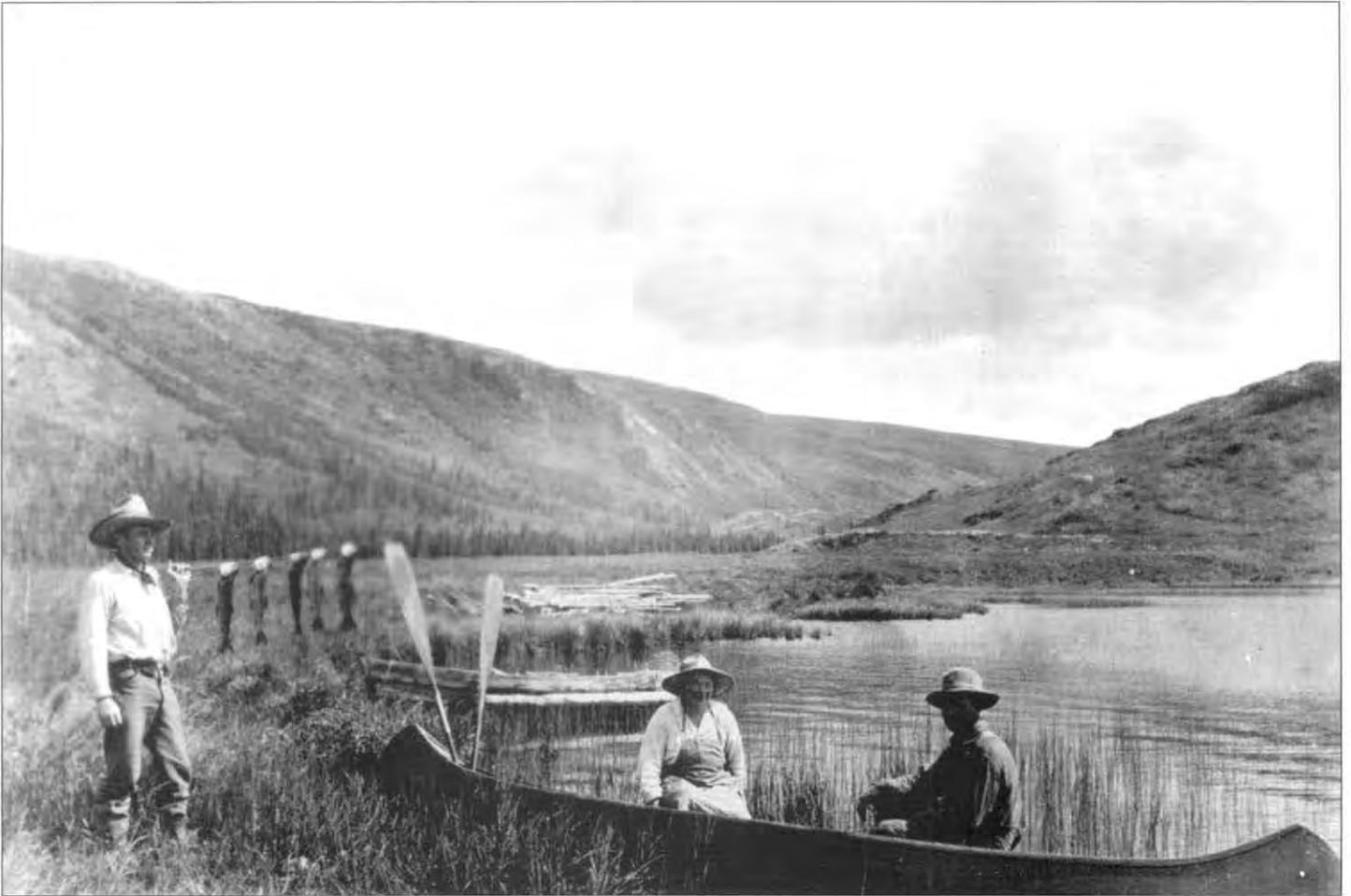
The grayling, a very hardy species of the trout family ... are sporty and playful, and of an average weight of 1 to 2 pounds. Large schools of these fish may be seen swimming in the waters of Savage River, at the north entrance to Savage Canyon. The angler may also try his luck in Riley Creek, about a mile from the [1922] park entrance, where grayling abound. There are also trout in the park streams which are classified locally as Dolly Varden. Their weight is in the neighborhood of 1 pound. Outside the park ... at Wonder Lake ... there is a variety of trout, some weighing as much as 35 pounds.¹⁰¹

Wonder Lake, as noted in Chapter 4, had been eyed as a potential hotel site as early as 1930, and the agency's interest in constructing such a facility had resulted in the Congressional passage of a bill (in May 1932) that brought Wonder Lake into the park. Interior Department official Ernest W. Sawyer, at the time, was fully aware that clouds in the area often obscured tourists' views of Mount McKinley. He noted that the visitors' time, therefore, "could be well spent fishing as well as

enjoying the scenery nearby."¹⁰² Grant Pearson and other rangers, at the time, were aware of the lake's fish resources, because they had doubtless eaten trout caught by homesteaders John and Paula Anderson, who lived on the lake's northern edge. They likewise knew about the grayling in nearby Moose Creek from Kantishna miners such as Johnny Busia.¹⁰³

The federal government showed an increased interest in the lake beginning in the mid-1930s. The NPS, in 1935, decided to build a hotel just south of the lake, and the following year the Alaska Road Commission extended the park road to the proposed hotel site. The government's decision, in 1937, to finance and build a hotel near the railroad depot temporarily put any plans for a Wonder Lake Hotel on the back burner. But many Alaskans and some in Congress still supported the idea. During a park tour in August 1939, Rep. Schuyler Bland (D-Va.), a member of the Subcommittee on Alaskan Fisheries, suggested that the lake be thoroughly studied "with the idea of stocking it for future use when a lodge for tourists is constructed" nearby. A Bureau of Fisheries official, who accompanied the congressional party, quickly seconded Bland's motion, and a month later, a Bureau specialist spent several days at the lake and reported that the lake was "amply supplied with fish food and could support many more lake trout than it now contains."¹⁰⁴

The completion of the McKinley Park Hotel, in June 1939, made the area surrounding the train depot a more significant visitor node than it had



John and Paula Anderson lived on the north shore of Wonder Lake and enjoyed fishing there, as evidenced by this photograph of them in their canoe. Jay Hathaway Collection

previously been (when accommodations had been limited to the Morino roadhouse, which had been sparingly used after the mid-1920s). In 1940, an ARC crew built a 1.5-mile trail to Horseshoe Lake, and by July of that year, park superintendent Frank Been was noting that the new trail was “proving very popular with tourists,” in part “due to the excellent fishing in Horseshoe Lake.”¹⁰⁵

Horseshoe Lake, as it turned out, was just one of many Alaskan lakes and streams that had recently become popular with recreational fishermen. In order to regulate this increasingly important activity in a territory that had traditionally been dominated by commercial fishing interests, the Bureau of Fisheries had issued its first territorial sport fishing regulations in March 1936; these initial rules pertained to trout only (although not to Dolly Varden trout), and they imposed a daily catch limit of 40 fish and a possession limit of 80 fish.¹⁰⁶ Four years later, slightly tighter rules were implemented; in the new rules, “game fish” included grayling as well as four types of trout: rainbow, steelhead, eastern brook and cutthroat. The regulations offered a number of general prohibitions against the wanton waste or destruction of game fish, the commercial harvest of game fish,

and the use of nets, traps, set lines, and explosives to catch fish.¹⁰⁷

The 1940 regulations also provided the first limitations on the number and size of fish that could legally be harvested. The bag limits were certainly generous by modern standards, and they were also generous when compared with general NPS regulations, which called for a ten-fish limit.¹⁰⁸ The 1940 Bureau of Fisheries regulations stated that

No one shall take in any one day ... more than a combined total of 25 game fish or more than 25 pounds and 1 game fish of all species, and no person shall have in his possession at any one time more than a combined total of 50 game fish of all species or more than 50 pounds and 1 game fish of all species.¹⁰⁹

Been and other park officials were apparently unaware of the issuance of these regulations until April 1941. Shortly afterward, officials announced that they would issue agency-specific regulations, identical to the Alaska regulations as they pertained to fishing bag limits, in order to give park personnel enforcement powers.¹¹⁰

The 1941 NPS regulations skirted the issue of fish stocking. This practice was both common and uncontroversial during this period, both in Alaska and in many other NPS units.¹¹¹ However, news reports that announced the 1941 regulations stated that NPS officials were “requesting that no fish be planted in the lakes, ponds and streams of Mount McKinley National Park. The NPS is responsible for that [stocking] work and desires to have park officers do it in order that records and observations can be made.”¹¹² This announcement was a logical extension of a 1936 agency policy “to prohibit the wider distribution of exotic species of fish within the national parks and monuments,” and to that end, that policy had stated that “no introductions of exotic species of fish shall be made in national park or monument waters now containing only native species.”¹¹³ The 1941 announcement, therefore, may have been aimed at federal or territorial fisheries officials, who may have wanted to stock Horseshoe Lake or other park waters with species (such as rainbow trout) that were native to Alaska but not to park waters. It may also have been Washington’s response to park superintendent Frank Been, who in July 1940 had told his superiors that sport fishing’s growing popularity “may make restocking of [Horseshoe] lake necessary. Some desirable species such as rainbow trout might be introduced.”¹¹⁴

The spring 1943 conversion of the McKinley Park Hotel from a civilian hostelry to a military recreation camp meant that the park was suddenly hosting hundreds of young men each week, many of whom loved to fish. NPS officials saw the influx as an opportunity, and that May, Pearson noted that “grayling are now being caught in all clear streams [and] Dolly Varden trout are being caught in Riley Creek.” By June, fishing pressure had increased to the point that Pearson told Army officials that anglers should take no more than 10 grayling per day and, at Wonder Lake, take a maximum of 2-3 lake trout per day.¹¹⁵

Soon afterward, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (which was the successor to the Bureau of Fisheries) temporarily interfered with park fishing. On July 1, 1943, Congress had passed a revised version of the Alaska Game Law; that law, which applied to sport fishing as well, defined “game fishes” to include Dolly Varden trout as well as grayling and other trout species.¹¹⁶ Based on that law, the Fish and Wildlife Service issued regulations on July 16 that—perhaps inadvertently—closed all Alaska NPS units to game fishing.¹¹⁷ On the heels of that regulation, NPS Director Drury sent a July 20 radiogram to Pearson telling him that all park waters were immediately closed to fishing. Pearson, responding

with his own radiogram, pleaded that the action “imposes drastic hardship on Army recreation program” because “fishing is most popular soldiers sport” and asked to “have this regulation rescinded.” Perhaps as a consequence, this and other irregularities in the July 16 regulations were addressed in a revised series of regulations, and fishing in the park was legally able to resume on August 24.¹¹⁸

The summer of 1943 also witnessed the first discussions about fishing licenses. Prior to 1943, no fishing licenses had ever been issued in the territory. This changed on July 1, 1943, when Congress passed the revised Alaska Game Law, which required residents, nonresidents, and aliens (non-U.S. residents) to obtain fishing licenses.¹¹⁹ Pearson, in response, argued that because “neither the Territory of Alaska nor the Alaska Game Commission has ever aided in the stocking of the streams within the park, ... it is difficult for us to understand why they should exact a license fee from our visiting soldiers.” He therefore suspended the license requirement for the time being. Washington officials, perhaps in deference to the many soldiers who were staying at the park for much-needed rest and recreation, backed Pearson.¹²⁰ Thereafter, Alaska Game Commission regulations consistently required all adult residents who wanted to fish in territorial waters to have a territorial fishing license. NPS regulations, however, overruled those regulations. At no time since 1943 have park anglers been required to possess an Alaska fishing license.¹²¹

Pearson’s June 1943 ruling regarding bag limits on grayling and lake trout apparently held sway only so long as military personnel were the primary park users, and in late August a new territorial regulation was put in place, stricter than the rules set forth in 1940-41. The new limit was “20 fishes singly or in the aggregate, but not to exceed 15 pounds and 1 fish daily[;] two daily bag limits in possession.”¹²² These regulations remained until 1947, when Frank Been—who had been in the Army since 1943—returned as the park superintendent. Given a rising number of visitors, and the expectation of even more visitors in the future, Been recommended that park regulations regarding bag limits match those for most parks located outside of Alaska. As a result, the Interior Department issued an August 1947 regulation that eliminated the special regulations that had been in force since May 1941. For the next several years, there were no special regulations regarding fishing in the park; instead, park fishing would be guided by general NPS regulations, which stated that “the number of fish that may be taken in any one day from the various lakes and streams shall be limited to 10 fish” and that fishermen could possess only two days’ catch at any one time.¹²³

As the number of visitors increased, park managers had specific concerns about the park's fish populations. In July 1950, for example, they closed Horseshoe Lake for the remainder of the season because it had been "excessively overfished preventing any stabilization and reproduction to take place." As early as 1948, Been had stated that due to an increase in private-car traffic and the consequent increase in fishing pressure, a "reduced limit" of lake trout at Wonder Lake "might be required." In 1952, Pearson agreed. He recommended the issuance of a new regulation that limited the Wonder Lake fish catch to just two fish per person per day. The regulation, which was implemented in late May 1952—just two years before the agency established its Wonder Lake Campground—stated that "the limit of catch of lake trout (mackinaw) per person per day shall be two fish, including those hooked and released." The regulation also made two revisions to general park fishing rules. First, instead of mandating a simple ten-fish limit, it stated that a single day's catch "shall be 10 fish but not to exceed 10 pounds and one fish." Second, it restricted the total possession limit from a two-day catch to a single-day catch.¹²⁴ This regulation has continued, unchanged, to the present day.¹²⁵

Meanwhile, rangers during the postwar period were paying increased attention to the park's fish resources. They noted newly-discovered species such as ling cod (burbot) in both Horseshoe Lake and Wonder Lake.¹²⁶ They conducted periodic patrols that specifically sought out fishermen, and in August 1958 rangers issued what may have been their first fish-related citation, to a Bureau of Public Roads construction worker for possessing "an overlimit of fish."¹²⁷ In the mid-1960s, Wonder Lake-based rangers conducted surveys of fishing success in that area. Science also entered the equation. In 1964, rangers were sufficiently worried about unknown fish parasites that they asked a University of Alaska professor for assistance (these turned out to be leeches that "probably do little damage to the fish"), and in 1966 preliminary work began on a dietary study of Wonder Lake's lake trout (which concluded that their primary food was insect larvae, supplemented by mollusks).¹²⁸

Postwar Natural Resource Issues

As noted above, biologist Adolph Murie had first spent time at the park in 1922 and 1923 with his brother Olaus. He had returned to Mount McKinley in early 1939 as a Bureau of Biological Survey employee, and he remained there as either a seasonal or permanent employee until August 1941. During that 2½-year period, he had become thoroughly familiar with the park as he compiled information on its wolves, sheep, caribou

and other large animals. Given a resurging and continuing interest in the role of wolves and other predators in the park's ecosystem, Murie returned to the park in the late summer of 1945. In 1946, he became an NPS employee, and although his job assignments were directed out of the regional office in San Francisco, he lived and worked at the park seasonally through 1947, then permanently from April 1948 through October 1950. During this period, he complemented his wolf-sheep duties by writing about other wildlife such as the tundra vole, grizzly bear, and wolverine.¹²⁹

Given the quality of his work, his superiors clamored for his participation in other projects, so in 1950 he headed off to Grand Teton National Park to study the local elk herd, and the following year he took part in Alaska Recreation Survey work in southeastern Alaska, Prince William Sound, and the Kenai Peninsula. He was also encouraged to take part in a study about cougars in Olympic National Park, but as Linda Franklin has noted, he "wanted to continue his McKinley studies instead, and that passion made him unenthusiastic about new opportunities." Murie, who served as the park's only biologist throughout this period, declared an interest in preparing "a new faunal series publication on the mammals" of the park." Part of his work during the summer of 1951 related to the still-active wolf-sheep issue, but the summers of 1953, 1955, and 1956 involved research into park birds and to other park mammals, such as the lynx. That research involved the compilation of an increasing amount of film footage as well as written documentation, and—perhaps because of his brother's leadership position with the Wilderness Society—he also began to advocate for the protection of the park's wilderness and wildlife. Projects outside of Alaska also commanded his attention, most notably as they pertained to the Grand Teton elk population.¹³⁰

Park staff during the postwar period benefited greatly from Murie's tutelage, and several rangers have noted that their interactions with the biologist were both educational and inspirational.¹³¹ Park leaders, moreover, lobbied for a staff naturalist. In response to Washington's demands, beginning in 1947, for a monthly wildlife report, Supt. Frank Been complained that "there are four rangers who do all the jobs of protection, maintenance, construction, and public contact that is divided among specialized staffs in other national parks. ... There should...be a naturalist staff for public relations as this is an important function of park purposes and serves to indoctrinate visitors with the appreciation for wildlife values."¹³² Finally, in June 1950, the superintendent designated University of Alaska botany student Elton



Adolph Murie is shown here in 1940 photographing wolf tracks on the East Fork of the Toklat River. Harpers Ferry Center #10582, NPS

S. Thayer as a seasonal naturalist; he was the first since the early 1940s. A year later, as noted in Chapter 11, William Nancarrow (who had been a park ranger since 1948) was appointed as the park's first permanent naturalist. After that date, a full-time naturalist was a fixture on the park staff, and beginning in 1954, at least one seasonal naturalist joined the ranks each summer.¹³³ Much of the naturalist's workload was educational or interpretive in scope, but he also helped coordinate the efforts of non-NPS researchers, and he conducted such research as time allowed.

The park's role in science was spotlighted by two high-level conferences held during the early 1950s. In May 1949, an Alaska geologist an-

nounced that "a group of scientists based in and out of Juneau have been discussing the possibility of forming an organization of scientists in the Territory." Given that level of interest, the first Alaska Science Conference, which was organized under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences, was held in Washington, D.C. in November 1950.¹³⁴ The following year, officials decided to hold the conference in Alaska, and they chose the McKinley Park Hotel as its venue. This conference, which was organized by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, was held for the five-day period following Labor Day, and in the words of Superintendent Pearson, "the greatest group of prominent natural history scientists to ever gather together in Alaska

This view of Bergh Lake was taken from near the park road, looking north down Stony Creek. The lake was named for Knute Bergh, a recently-deceased U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey contract pilot. DENA 3533, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



attended this conference.” The meeting proved so successful that it was repeated at the hotel in late September 1952. These two meetings attracted not only scientists but also federal agency heads, planners, and territorial politicians. The park superintendent played the role of host and local organizer, and he also conducted trips out the park road. Most of the papers at the conference were not thematically related to specific NPS concerns, but park employees contributed in various ways. In 1951, “many of the scientists went on field trips which were directed by Park Biologist Adolph Murie,” while in 1952, “lectures and papers were presented on land with regard to moose and caribou” and employees attended “a most interesting forum discussion upon predation and predator control.”¹³⁵ After 1952, the Alaska Science Conference typically met in either Anchorage, Fairbanks, or Juneau, and not at the park; NPS staff, however, were able to attend a number of these meetings.¹³⁶

Issues related to the park’s landforms first became prominent during this period. Given the extraordinary efforts of U.S. Geological Survey personnel, who had published reports about the park area beginning in 1907, park staff could easily access a substantial amount of information about the park’s geology, glaciology, and hydrology.¹³⁷ But given the easy visibility and the dynamism of many glaciers that spilled out from the high Alaska Range, staff beginning in 1932 sought specific glacial data by “taking pictures and measurements of Muldrow, Peters, Hanna and Herron Glaciers.”¹³⁸ Rangers established large stone monuments near the faces of many park glaciers and, for the remainder of the

decade, returned to make comparative photos and measurements.¹³⁹ By 1939, however, rangers had glumly concluded that “established monuments were frequently washed away,” which underscored the need “for definitely permanent reference points.” A new method, instituted in 1940, appeared more promising, but World War II forced a cessation of these studies.¹⁴⁰ Bradford Washburn, the mountaineer, stated that cosmic ray research, not glaciological research, helped justify the need for the 1947 “White Tower” expedition. (See Chapter 13.) Once on the mountain, however, he also gathered data about the Muldrow Glacier’s movements. Washburn was helpful in other ways, too; the meticulous photographs he took of the area—airial footage beginning in 1936, ground photography beginning with his 1942 expedition—served as valuable baseline data for future research.¹⁴¹

Heightened awareness of the park’s landforms did not take place until July 1953, when an earthquake, combined with heavy rainstorms, caused a major landslide in Stony Creek Canyon, between Highway Pass and Stony Hill overlook. The slide, approximately one mile north of the park road, dammed the creek bed with a 200-foot berm, and within a month, a mile-long lake had formed—complete with a thriving grayling population—that reached to within 150 feet of the park road. But erosion soon began to wear down the huge earthen dam, and during the next three years the newly-designated “Bergh Lake” diminished to about half a mile in length. On July 2, 1986, thirty-three years after the lake was formed, rain-swollen waters dug through the berm and the lake disappeared.¹⁴²

Mission 66: The Promise and the Reality

In February 1956, NPS Director Conrad Wirth announced the beginning of Mission 66, a program that promised a new infusion of cash to an agency that had been suffering from a postwar crush of visitation. The prospectus that park staff developed in response to Wirth's announcement (see Chapter 7) recognized that the park's two primary purposes (based on the 1917 legislation) were Mount McKinley (and the scenery that surrounded it) and the area's biological diversity. In addition, "highest ranking among the intangible values of the park is its distinct wilderness feel." Based on those values, staff noted that "of utmost importance ... is the continuation of scientific research within the area." The two most prominent "scientific research" needs, however, were pragmatic to the extreme; one project called for a study to eliminate "glaciering" or road icing along the park road, while another called for "biological and geological research" near the western end of the park road "to obtain factual material for the opposition or support" of new road building activities. The prospectus also declared the need for "continual investigations of the ecological relationships of the flora and fauna ... in the maintenance of indigenous forms." Specific biological projects included "studies of range carrying capacities in regard to large herbivores; altitudinal distribution of plants and animals; and physiological studies of special adaptations for arctic existence," while landform-related studies included additional "research concerning the formation of the Alaska Range and its complex lithology" and a renewal of studies of the "origin, growth, and movement" of the park's glaciers, as well as new work on the "location and effect

of permafrost" in the park.¹⁴³ The prospectus envisioned almost \$7 million in new spending at the park; virtually all of it, however, would go toward improved roads, buildings, and utilities. Resource protection, by contrast, would get short shrift; the plan's only nod in this area was the eventual addition of new naturalists (primarily seasonal) to the park staff. No funds would be directed toward scientific research.¹⁴⁴

The final park Mission 66 plan, released in May 1957, was even less sensitive to resource protection than the previous year's prospectus. While the final plan acknowledged that "it is the combination of superlative mountain scenery and wildlife along with the palpable wilderness aspect of McKinley Park that make it deserving of preservation for this and future generations of Americans," it also stated that "McKinley is still in its embryonic development stages" and that "the McKinley Mission 66 program was formulated to correct present day deficiencies and to prepare for the increase in visitation and its attendant problems due to the opening of the park to automobile travel." It stated, somewhat ironically, that "the key to the development theme of the park is the maintenance of wilderness integrity," but like the preceding prospectus, it recommended money solely for construction and improvements: for roads and trails (\$7.2 million), structures and utilities (\$2.5 million), and campgrounds and signs (\$0.1 million).¹⁴⁵

Adolph Murie, who had been at the park when the Mission 66 team visited the park in July 1956 (though absent during the winter of 1955-56, when the initial prospectus was prepared), was



Adolph Murie (left) spent more of his summers based at the Igloo Cabin than any other location in the park. He is pictured here with Joe Hankins in front of the Igloo Cabin. Wallace A. Cole Collection



In the summer of 1957 graduate student Jack Gross was hired by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct a ground-based sheep survey in Mt. McKinley National Park, accompanied by horse packer Willy Miller. The purpose of the survey was to obtain more accurate sex and age information to augment aerial surveys. DENA 18-58, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

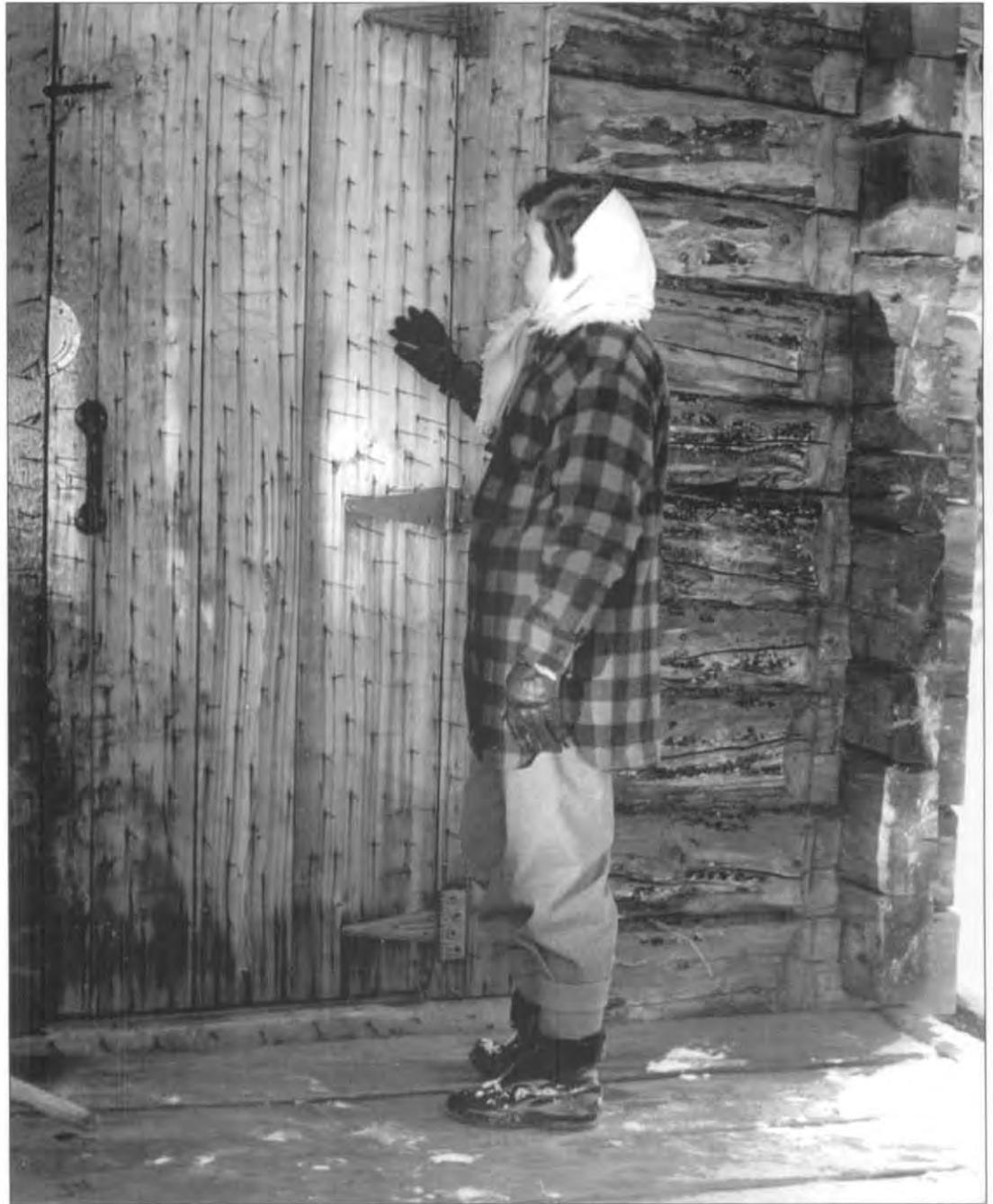
unhappy with the park's Mission 66 plans. He felt that "because McKinley is considered by many to be our outstanding wildlife park, outstanding even by Alaska standards, it behooves us to give the most careful consideration to all intrusions before approving any of them." He, unlike others at the park, sought to preserve the park's "wilderness character." He made no specific recommendations for additional natural resource studies; he did, however, urge the agency to expand the park boundary northward in the Wonder Lake area, both to eliminate a threat to hunting but also on aesthetic grounds, "to preserve a proper setting at Wonder Lake from which to enjoy this sublime region."¹⁴⁶

Meanwhile, park wildlife research in the wake of the Mission 66 program continued much as it had before. The wolf-sheep controversy by now had receded as a public issue, but in recognition of the continuing importance of the park's most prominent wildlife species, most attention continued to be directed toward the park's sheep and caribou populations. The Fish and Wildlife

Service, in cooperation with the NPS, conducted aerial and ground sheep surveys at least once per year from 1957 to 1959; these were supplemented by additional aerial surveys in 1961 and 1962.¹⁴⁷ Murie, who had spent the summers of 1955 and 1956 at the park, returned in May 1959 and remained there each summer for more than a decade—well past his December 1964 retirement.¹⁴⁸ He spent most of those summers, home-based at the Igloo Creek cabin, studying the park's caribou, sheep, and other wildlife, although in 1961 he helped conduct a wildlife study of the Windy Creek and Foggy Pass areas. This latter work was apparently a response to various plans to excavate limestone along the West Fork of Windy Creek and to build a cement plant nearby (see Chapter 14). In addition, he completed books on the park's mammals and birds in 1962 and 1963, respectively.¹⁴⁹

The park attracted several outside researchers during this period. Ted Lachelt, a University of Alaska graduate student, spent several months in the field on a wolverine study, while Richard

To keep bears from breaking into unattended cabins, "bear shutters" with nails driven through the wood were fashioned to fit over cabin doors and windows. These were removed when the cabin was occupied and replaced when the cabin was vacated. Charles Ott Photo, Denali National Park and Preserve



Coleman, from the Bureau of Public Health, obtained a permit to collect invertebrates.¹⁵⁰ In June 1957, several scientists arrived at the park to study the park's bird and insect populations, and throughout the summer of 1957, scientists from both the U.S. Geological Survey and the American Geographical Society descended on Muldrow Glacier to investigate its recent surge.¹⁵¹ Les Viereck, from the University of Colorado, spent the summers of 1956 and 1958 collecting mosses, lichens, and vascular plants near Mount Eielson, and Eleanor Viereck (Les's wife) studied the park's small mammal populations.¹⁵² The summer of 1959 brought two scientists to the park to make further studies of Muldrow Glacier. Napier Shelton, from Duke University, spent the summer of 1961 studying the plant distribution in the Toklat

and Teklanika river basins, and Ray Davis, a University of Idaho professor, arrived in 1962 to study the Claytonia, or spring beauty.¹⁵³ In 1963, British ecologist Frank Fraser Darling spent a week with Murie and participated in his field research, and in 1964 two researchers visited: Wallace Grange from Wisconsin, who spent much of the summer studying the park's snowshoe hare population, and Eric Hultén, the well-known Swedish botanist, who undertook a plant collecting project with Adolph and Louise Murie's assistance.¹⁵⁴

Postwar Bear Management: Avoidance, Protection, and Study

Bears, which had first emerged as a management problem during the late 1920s (see above), continued to cause problems through the mid-1940s,

Ranger John Rumohr is shown here releasing a grizzly bear from the park's mobile culvert bear trap. Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



primarily by damaging the park's patrol cabins. In response, rangers spent considerable time and effort to prevent new depredations, and during the spring of 1946 the park reported that these cabins all sported nails on the door casing, on the door itself, and on the window shutters. Damage continued, however, particularly near the western end of the park road. In June 1946, rangers reported that a bear had entered the McKinley Bar patrol cabin and "literally wrecked the place," and the following year one of the Camp Eielson buildings was "mauled by a grizzly."¹⁵⁵ The most vulnerable building, however, was the Wonder Lake Ranger Station. A "marauding she-bear" damaged the facility on numerous occasions during the summer of 1948, causing so much fear among park staff that repairs did not commence until November, "to be sure that the bear was hibernating."¹⁵⁶ The year 1949 brought more grim news. Park staff noted that it was "the worst in the history of the park for bear trouble. They have broken into most of our patrol cabins along the park road." Two years later, a 650-pound grizzly bear damaged the mess hall and bunkhouse at the long-abandoned Savage River concessions camp.¹⁵⁷ On two occasions, bears attacked people; in July 1949, a U.S. Geological Survey employee working in the Ewe Creek vicinity "got claw marks on his back," and in June 1951 an ARC worker was "badly bitten and mauled" by a Toklat grizzly.¹⁵⁸

Employees, during this period, initially used a three-pronged approach toward bears. First,

both NPS and Alaska Road Commission staff tried to minimize the amount of food kept at their cabins and camps. If bears lingered nearby, they fired various warning shots, hoping to frighten them away; or, in the case of the Horseshoe Lake Trail, rangers simply closed it for several weeks. If warning measures failed, however, personnel were authorized to shoot habituated bears. Thus several incidents of avoidance behavior were noted in the park records, both at the ARC's Toklat road camp and the Wonder Lake Ranger Station.¹⁵⁹ But in July 1946 a Camp Eielson bear "became mean, even chasing people on three different occasions," and it "finally had to be destroyed to prevent a serious accident." And in September 1948, a maimed bear was killed by rangers about two miles north of the railroad depot "to avoid possibility of going berserk from pain and rage and becoming a hazard to people."¹⁶⁰

In June 1949, grizzlies were seen prowling around both the park headquarters and the Toklat road camp. So to minimize future incidents, park mechanic John E. Williams devised a live bear trap from a section of road culvert and mounted it on a two-wheeled trailer. By August the trap was complete, and two troublesome Toklat-area bears were trapped, then released elsewhere in the park.¹⁶¹ Additional relocations, or attempted relocations, took place at least once per year for several years thereafter.¹⁶² Bears, attracted by food odors, also emerged as a problem during the summer of 1951 at the park's garbage dump, just east of the McKinley Park airstrip.

Given the growing number of bear problems at the park—to the patrol cabins, at the ARC camps, and the hotel-area garbage dump—NPS Regional Director Lawrence Merriam in September 1951 requested “the recommendations of Dr. Murie on the bear management problem.” Murie’s cabin recommendations did *not* include spiked doors and shutters (he declared them “atrocious in appearance and inefficient”); instead, he suggested “proper bear-exclusion shutters ... and a bear-proof door,” and the need for all stored food to be kept in a nearby cache, not in the cabin itself. At the ARC camps, the solution to the garbage problem lay in insisting that personnel empty their garbage cans each evening and that “some kind of fencing” was needed to surround the refuse piles. And at the hotel-area garbage dump, the best long-term solution “would be a bear-proof fence that does not depend upon electricity.” Pending the construction of such a fence, however, he suggested that “all the bears ... be live-trapped and hauled westward to the Wonder Lake or Red Top mine areas.”¹⁶³

Murie’s recommendations had mixed results. Attacks on cabins continued; in 1952, for example, a bear inflicted “minor depredations” on the Sanctuary patrol cabin. A year later, a ranger on an extended dogsled trip reported that “many of the outlying cabins were in poor condition due to lack of maintenance and depredation from bear,” and in July 1955 a grizzly “ripped up” a house trailer located at Wonder Lake.¹⁶⁴ Attacks at the ARC camps, however, ceased. Park personnel continued to trap and relocate bears for the next several years; the practice, however, was apparently abandoned after the summer of 1954.¹⁶⁵ At the dump, 1951 was the first year in what turned out to be a five-year management effort, the process of which is detailed in Chapter 6.

Bear problems of another sort brought about changes in the Sable Pass area. Soon after the park road was completed to this area, park officials recognized the area’s outstanding wildlife; in a June 1930 report, Supt. Liek noted that “the game in this section is very tame and countless thousands of sheep and caribou can be seen on the hill sides.”¹⁶⁶ In 1940, however, Supt. Been noted a new phenomenon: “A large Toklat grizzly bear and her cub ranged through the Sable Pass section all summer.” And after that date, most Sable Pass visitors noted the area’s bears to the exclusion of other large animals. By the early 1950s, grizzlies in the area “were reported almost daily by tourists and park personnel alike.”¹⁶⁷ This predictability, however, brought problems, because in July 1955, the park noted that “several persistent photographers” had been leaving the road right-of-way and “photographing the bears

in that area day after day and have caused the animals to move away from the roadside.” As a result, “visitors have had difficulty in locating the bears on the feeding grounds.” Aware that the impending completion of the Denali Highway would bring thousands of privately-owned automobiles to the area, park and regional officials initiated “a discussion on restricting the Sable Pass to roadside photography to permit the Toklat grizzly to graze undisturbed.” The following February, park officials recommended a special regulation to that effect, which stated that between mileposts 37 and 42 (roughly for two miles on either side of Sable Pass) and one mile on either side of the park road, the agency would prohibit entry to “photographers and hikers.”¹⁶⁸ This prohibition was later broadened to include “other Park visitors except as may be specifically authorized by the Superintendent,” and it became effective on June 20, 1956, when it was published in the *Federal Register*. The regulation evidently worked; in 1959, Adolph Murie noted that “increased traffic over the park road [since the Denali Highway opened in August 1957] has not as yet forced the grizzly out of its habitat in the vicinity of Sable Pass.”¹⁶⁹ The regulation remained until October 1983, when it was eliminated in favor of a more broadly-applicable language in the “closures and public limits” section of the agency’s general regulations. The area today remains closed to general public entry.¹⁷⁰

Soon after the Sable Pass protection zone was implemented, new studies began about the park’s grizzlies. Dr. Frederick Dean, a University of Alaska wildlife biology professor and the ad hoc head of the Alaska Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, received an Arctic Institute of North America grant for a long-term study of the Toklat grizzly.¹⁷¹ He arrived at the park in June 1957, settled into the patrol cabin at Igloo, and spent the remainder of the summer observing the bears’ distribution, abundance, and habits. He returned the following June, and each summer until 1960 saw him making either extended visits to the park or, on occasion, making aerial bear censuses.¹⁷² But his inability to obtain funding for additional field work prematurely curtailed his study, and few tangible recommendations from his work were forwarded to park staff.¹⁷³

The park, meanwhile, continued to manage its bear population much as it had during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Bears had not been much of a management problem for several years after 1955, but during the summer of 1960 at least five grizzly bears, attracted by food, caused trouble up and down the park road. (One bear, according to an NPS report, “took exception to [an NPS] house trailer near the Wonder Lake Ranger



The 5-mile-long Sable Pass closure, in effect continuously since 1956, provides a limited area along the park road where visitors have an opportunity to view wildlife undisturbed, in a natural setting. NPS Interp. Collection, #4103, Denali National Park and Preserve

Station and demolished the unit.”) In each case, the bears were live-trapped and “removed to a remote area in the park.” Rangers, in 1961, did much the same to at least six more bears.¹⁷⁴ But between then and 1966, only two nuisance bears were recorded: in October 1963, a “rogue black bear” tried to break into several buildings and cars at headquarters and had to be destroyed, and in September 1965 an immature grizzly was

live-trapped and removed after tearing the siding from a staff residence.¹⁷⁵ And one bear-caused injury was reported; in 1961, graduate student Napier Shelton, who was working on the south slope of Igloo Mountain, received puncture wounds to his thigh and a deep laceration to his leg. The injury put him in a Fairbanks hospital for several days, but three weeks later he was back in the field.¹⁷⁶

The park, by necessity, also managed other animals during the postwar period. Beavers, along the railroad corridor, were an occasional problem during the late 1940s, and in both 1961 and 1962 several were live-trapped and removed (to upper Hines Creek) because their damming activities were threatening the railroad crossing near Milepost 345.¹⁷⁷ Porcupines, as noted above, had been reported as nuisances since the 1920s, and the damage they created caused additional concern during the early 1950s. Managers did not intervene during these periods. But when a porcupine, in the spring of 1965, attacked several birch trees in the headquarters area, staff reacted by placing “protective coverings” on the trees and removing the offending animal.¹⁷⁸ Smaller animals could be intrusive, too; foxes, along with arctic weasels, often lingered near residences and occasionally ransacked food sources. But after the mid-1950s, a greater emphasis on secure food storage brought a stop to this activity.¹⁷⁹

Park Wildlife Planning and Its Ramifications, 1961-1971

Stewart Udall, who was President Kennedy’s Interior Secretary, was well aware of a growing national awareness of ecology and the interrelatedness of nature. In 1962, therefore, he appointed a committee headed by A. Starker Leopold, and he asked the committee to write a report that applied these themes to wildlife management. The result of that effort, released in March 1963, had an immediate impact on NPS resource management. The committee’s findings, known informally as the Leopold Report, called on NPS managers to “recognize the enormous complexity of ecologic communities and the diversity of management procedures required to preserve them.” The report further stated that scientific research should “form the basis for all management programs” and that a broad range of agency decision making should fall under the “full jurisdiction of biologically trained personnel.” To adopt these recommendations, as the report noted, would be a “major policy change” for a bureau that—particularly since the commencement of the Mission 66 program—had primarily focused on accommodating tourism.¹⁸⁰

In reaction to the Leopold Report and a similar National Academy of Sciences report, issued later that year, NPS Director George Hartzog established a new Division of Natural Sciences. Before long, staff from the various park units was asked to compile planning documents that laid out their particular research requirements.¹⁸¹ At Mount McKinley, Superintendent Oscar Dick spearheaded the compilation of the park’s first natural resource planning document. The so-called *Long-Range Wildlife and Range Manage-*

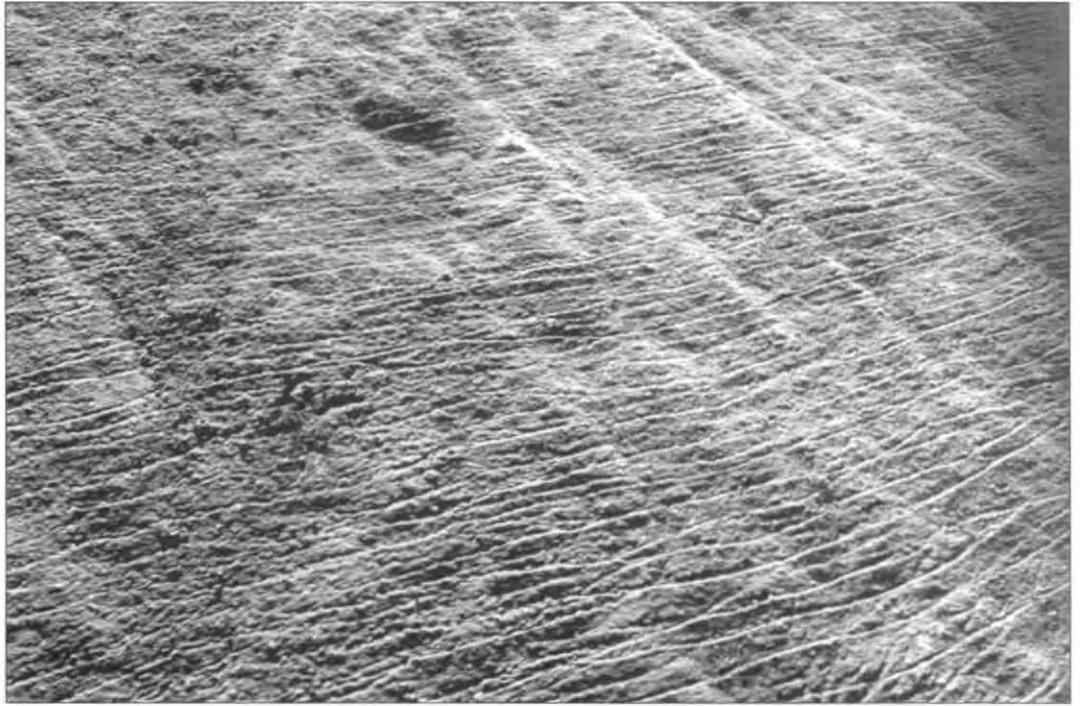
ment Plan was drafted in early 1964. After revisions from regional and Washington officials, the final plan was approved in March 1965. The plan, which covered the 1964-1969 period, stated that “wildlife management in the immediate future will accentuate the protection of Park wildlife from human influence” and that “ecological research will be encouraged.”

To carry out those objectives, the park staff urged a three-pronged approach. First, the aerial Dall sheep censuses which had been carried out since the 1940s needed to be continued “in order to provide long term information on population fluctuations of this important species.” Second, in order to eliminate the “quasi-domestication of bear, fox, and other animals,” staff needed “consistent enforcement of existing regulations, prompt action in removing addicted (rogue) animals, [and] adequate sanitation in campgrounds, residential areas, dumps, etc.” Finally, staff recognized that “increased use of the lands near the Park may eventually have a marked deleterious effect on the natural balance” of caribou and Dall sheep, so they recommended “boundary extensions as well as firm agreements with agencies administering adjacent lands.”¹⁸²

During the five years after the plan was approved, some aspects of the plan were implemented to a greater degree than others. In part, this mixed record was due to a lack of staff. Adolph Murie, the park’s longtime biologist, had retired in December 1964, and although he continued as a summertime resident at the park until 1970, he observed wildlife primarily as an avocation; he also continued his long-running role as an ardent defender of the park’s natural values. More specifically, he played a key role in the long-running controversy over the park road (see Chapter 7), and he also served as a consultant to two different master planning studies.¹⁸³ In late 1965 officials selected Richard Prasil, the agency’s regional naturalist, to replace Murie as biologist. Prasil, however, did not move to Alaska until June 1966, and he was based in the newly-established Anchorage office, not at the park. Prasil, given the agency’s expanding role in the state, juggled a variety of roles.¹⁸⁴ Even so, he completed several wildlife censuses and other brief biological reports between 1967 and 1973.¹⁸⁵

Perhaps because of this lack of staff, the park did not continue its aerial sheep counts during the mid-to-late 1960s. This may have been because park staff, aided by the Murie’s summertime observations, concluded that the sheep population was relatively healthy.¹⁸⁶ The park continued to have occasional problems with animal “quasi-domestication.” These problems led to

This mountainside exhibits well-worn and numerous caribou trails along routes to calving areas on the south side of the Alaska Range in Mt. McKinley National Park. John Dallemolle Photo, NPS, Denali National Park and Preserve



the relocations of several problem bears and, on a more tragic note, an August 1967 bear assault on a park employee just west of Toklat Campground.¹⁸⁷ The NPS, during this period, also mulled over the need for a boundary extension in order to preserve the year-round habitat of the park's sheep and caribou populations. As noted in Chapter 7, this idea was initially considered on a modest scale in 1965, while in 1966 and 1968, internally-circulated master plans recommended the acquisition of an increasingly large tract of land north of the park boundary.

In the meantime, scientific studies were advanced by both NPS employees and outside researchers. In the spring of 1967, graduate student Gordon Haber (who had served as a seasonal ranger-naturalist the previous summer) geared up to begin his own study of wolves in the park. That study, which became Haber's master's thesis, was completed in 1968. Also in 1967, NPS biologist Richard Prasil conducted two aerial wolf censuses.¹⁸⁸ The following year, Prasil published additional observations about the park's wolves, caribou, and grizzly bear populations, and he continued to pay attention to the wolf and caribou situation through the early 1970s.¹⁸⁹

In 1969, as a follow-up to agency policy that had been set in motion by the Leopold Report, park staff prepared a second, five-year long range wildlife management plan. That report stated that "the goal of McKinley wildlife management should be a continued research approach and a hands-off management policy unless the resource is being changed by human activities." Control efforts would "be directed towards

alleviating or minimizing the effect of man's presence" and included "consistent enforcement of regulations, adequate sanitation in areas of human occupancy, and public educational programs." The only reduction program envisioned, in fact, was "the occasional removal of animals that endanger human life." The "foundation for Park wildlife management" would continue to be based on "accurate documentation of pertinent data by Park personnel" along with "formal projects conducted by scientific specialists." In response to a problem of "wolf poaching from the air," the plan recommended "more intensive aerial patrol of the Park," and it continued its earlier suggestion that the only way to truly protect the park's large mammal populations was "through extensive boundary changes or ... cooperative agreements with federal and state land management agencies."¹⁹⁰

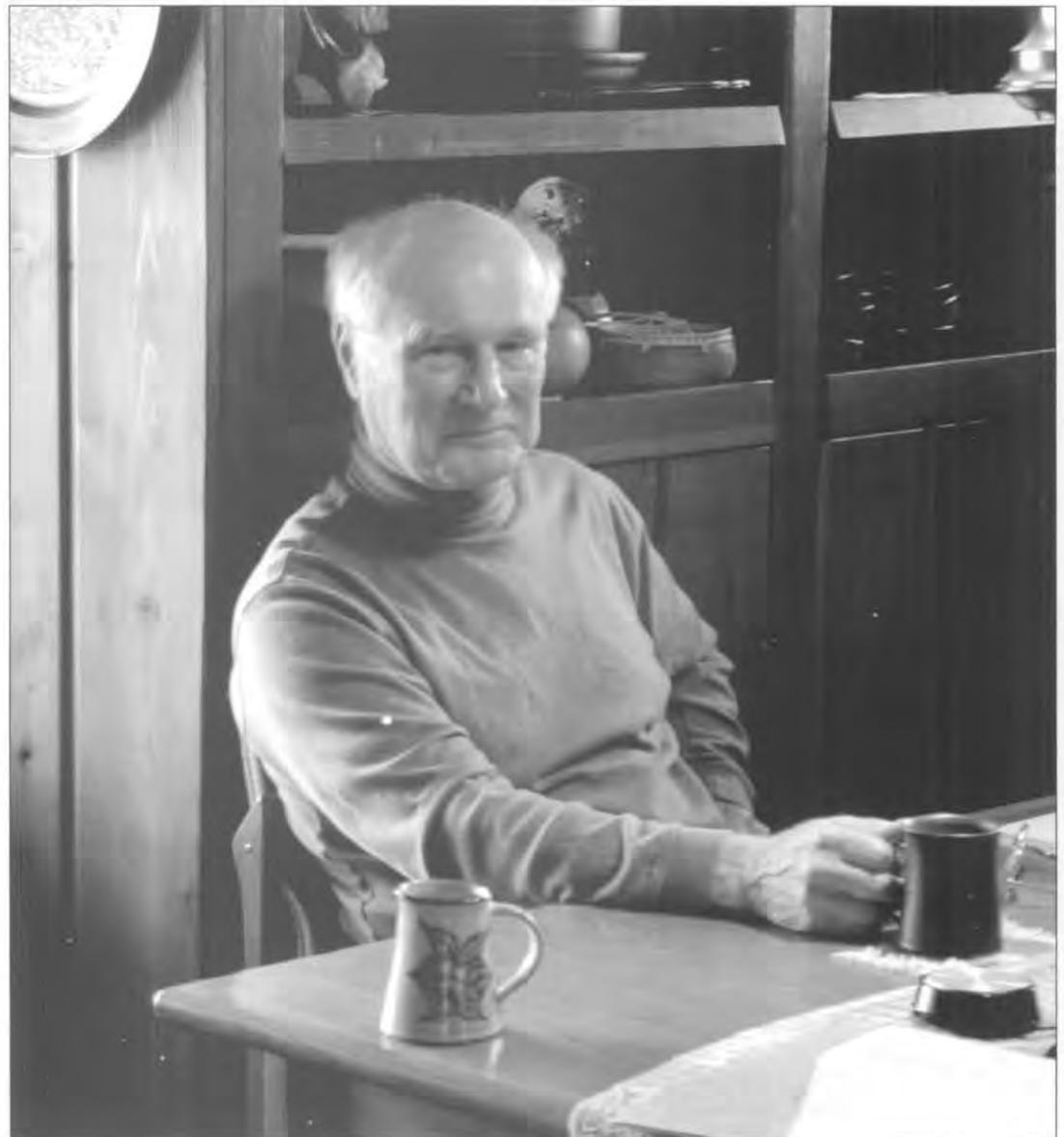
Establishing a Park Resource Management Program, 1972-1980

During the winter of 1971-1972, park visitation patterns were changed dramatically because of a decision, by NPS Director George Hartzog, to rationalize the number of passenger vehicles traveling along most of the park road. (See Chapter 8.) Hartzog, in making his decision, recognized that because of the completion of the new Anchorage-Fairbanks highway, the summer of 1972 would bring a dramatic increase in park visitation. He also knew that park staff had been concerned since the late 1960s about the effect of existing automobile traffic on park wildlife, and as early as 1968, park superintendent George Hall had urged the implementation of some viable alternative to increased passenger car

traffic. Because of Hartzog's decision, the agency instituted a new system of shuttle buses, which complemented the concessioner's long-established tour buses. The new system successfully operated in 1972, although not without problems, and by that fall, many were concerned about the impact of the new transportation system on the park's animal populations and vegetation. The NPS, by this time, had already begun working with the University of Alaska on a new, ad hoc organization called the Alaska Cooperative Park Studies Unit (CPSU). Dr. Fred Dean, the professor who headed the unit, was familiar with the park, and knowing the park's interest in the subject, he asked graduate student Diane Tracy to undertake the project. Tracy spent much of the summers of 1973 and 1974 in the field, often riding park buses, and by late 1975, a progress report of her research findings had been published.¹⁹¹

Tracy's efforts turned out to be the first of many CPSU studies about the park's natural resources

that would be undertaken during the 1970s and early 1980s. Unlike the unit's Anthropology and Historic Preservation Program, which was primarily concerned with the resources in proposed park units, the Biology and Resource Management Program focused most of its projects on Mount McKinley National Park and the other three Alaska park units. The relative close distance between Fairbanks and the park, and the relatively high sophistication of Mount McKinley's resource problems in comparison with other park units, attracted many researchers to the park. The CPSU, as a result, sponsored park-based projects related to grizzly bear ecology, human disturbance impacts on wolves, animals' use of the park's dump sites, Dall sheep feeding ecology, moose winter survival rates, moose-wolf habitat interactions, vegetation mapping, vegetation trampling impacts, and similar topics.¹⁹² These projects, which were partly or wholly financed by the NPS, were usually framed so as to resolve specific resource-related problems, and they



Fred Dean, shown here in 2005, began his long-term grizzly bear research in Mt. McKinley National Park in 1957. He later directed the activities of the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, a cooperative effort between the National Park Service and the University of Alaska, promoting research to answer management questions and provide an understanding of park ecosystems. NPS Photo

benefited not only the agency, but several also became the subject of students' master's theses.¹⁹³

CPSU-affiliated personnel, however, were not the only scientists conducting studies at the park during this period. NPS personnel, either at the park or area-office levels, conducted a number of aerial sheep censuses as well as caribou population and movement studies. Other wildlife studies were conducted by the Alaska Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, the organization with which Frederick Dean had been affiliated during his 1957-60 grizzly bear studies.¹⁹⁴

The large number of non-NPS researchers that descended on the park demanded the establishment of a staff liaison, so during the summer of 1973—shortly after Diane Tracy, the first CPSU researcher began working on her Mount McKinley study—the agency decided to hire Steve Buskirk, a master's-level biologist who had been a full-time park ranger since May 1972. (Buskirk, upon being selected, was known as a ranger with a resource specialty, but by the end of the year his title had shifted to resource management specialist.) In his new role, he was asked to develop a list of research priorities (this list, forwarded on to CPSU personnel, helped influence the types of research that took place in the park), and he was also told to “develop a plan to deal with the explosive growth in backcountry use.”¹⁹⁵ This task, during the winter of 1973-1974, led to his compilation of the park's first backcountry management plan (see Chapter 8). Buskirk remained at the park until 1977, and the following August he was succeeded by John Dalle-Molle. Interest in resources was sufficiently great that Dalle-Molle, in April of 1979, hired an assistant, Joe Van Horn.

At the park from 1972 to 1977, Steve Buskirk developed a list of research priorities and created a plan to deal with increasing backcountry use. NPS Interp. Collection, #2845, Denali National Park and Preserve



Dalle-Molle continued in his position until he stepped down in the late 1980s; Van Horn continued to work in the park's resources division for almost twenty years.¹⁹⁶

One resource-related problem area that ballooned into importance during the 1970s was bear management. Bear-human encounters, as noted above, had been a nagging problem ever since the 1920s, but in the half-century of park management prior to 1972, so-called “incidents”¹⁹⁷ had been few (less than one per year), and there had been just four injuries from bear attacks. But the year 1972 brought a doubling of park visitation from the year before, and visitation in 1980 was more than seven times that of 1971. Given this population explosion, incidents and injuries grew apace. Between 1972 and 1980, inclusively, rangers recorded 138 incidents; this averaged approximately 15 incidents, and several hundred dollars in property damage, each year. In addition, there were nine bear-caused injuries (one per year), several of them serious. Backcountry campers, though numerically small when compared to other park visitors, accounted for well over half of these incidents and injuries.¹⁹⁸



As a Cooperative Park Studies Unit researcher for 2 years, Ken Whitten studied the habitat relationships and population dynamics of Dall sheep in Mt. McKinley National Park, gathering data for his 1975 Master of Science thesis. Ken Whitten Photo

In order to manage this increasingly complex problem, the park in 1972 published and distributed a bear warning folder (entitled *Grizzly Bear - Friend or Foe?*), and a year later there was an ongoing program to educate the public to the hazards of bear encounters and how to avoid them. A card for this purpose was distributed to all visitors, and a backcountry use folder that

During his tenure as resource manager, John Dalle-Molle initiated an inventory of park resources, drafted the first resource management plan, and emphasized protection of the park's wilderness character. DENA 9024, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



explained bear hazards was distributed to all backcountry users.¹⁹⁹ In 1974, the park began requiring backcountry users to obtain access permits, and as part of the permit-distribution process, rangers educated campers about proper behavior toward bears and food storage methods. In 1978, park staff installed bear proof garbage cans at the Riley Creek campground—the first in a process that, within five years, resulted in such cans throughout the park—and that same year, park staff closed backcountry units for the first time due to bear activity. Also, by this time, staff had developed a bear incident reporting form, equipped rangers with immobilizing drugs, and prepared their first bear-human conflict management plan. And in order to standardize the collection of data about bear-human incidents, the park in 1980 instituted the Bear Information Management System, a management tool that had been pioneered at Glacier National Park during the 1970s.²⁰⁰ Park staff, during this period, continued to manage problem bears much the same way they had since Murie, in 1951, had weighed in with his recommendations: 1) by attempting to separate bears from potential human-related food sources, 2) by relocating bears who were associating either people or structures with those food sources, and 3) destroying bears who continued to be problems to people or structures. Between 1972 and 1980, inclusively, 17 bears had to be relocated. Some of these relocations were apparently successful, but at least four park bears had to be destroyed.²⁰¹

Park staff, during this period, closed an increasing number of backcountry areas in order to

protect specific species. The first known closure decisions were public safety responses to bear activity; in May 1952, for example, staff closed the park's garbage dump to visitors, and three years later, visitors were blocked from using the Horseshoe Lake trail.²⁰² In early 1957, the land on either side of the park road at Sable Pass was permanently closed (as noted above) in order to ensure the continuation of high-quality bear viewing opportunities. Then, in 1973, the park brass accepted biologist Gordon Haber's recommendation to close, for the entire summer, several "prime visitor use areas" totaling 42,456 acres in order to protect wolf dens and denning areas. Closures to protect the park's wolves continue to the present time.²⁰³ In 1976, park staff opted for the first time to close an area surrounding an active gyrfalcon nest, and in 1978 an area was closed in the vicinity of a fox den.²⁰⁴

Resource Planning for the Newly-Expanded Park Unit

As noted in Chapter 8, much of the 1970s was spent in a major administrative and legislative battle over the fate of the so-called Alaska National Interest Lands. Some of the most coveted lands surrounded Mount McKinley National Park, so in December 1978, President Carter signed a proclamation which established 3,890,000-acre Denali National Monument. The proclamation language extolled primarily natural resource values: the protection of various "glaciers on the south face," the "geologically unique Cathedral Spires," "significant habitat for the McKinley caribou herd" and "other scientifically important mammals such as grizzly bear, wolf,



In 1974, bears regularly visited the park garbage dump, located south of the George Parks Highway railroad crossing. Chip Downing Photo, NPS Photo, Denali National Park and Preserve



By 1975 this electric fence prevented bears from obtaining human food at the park garbage dump. Chip Downing Photo, NPS Photo, Denali National Park and Preserve

and wolverine,” the Toklat River warm springs with its “unusual run of Chum salmon,” and “the entirety of this, the highest peak on the North American continent.”²⁰⁵

Given the fact that Carter, on the same day, had established 16 other national monuments (most of which were not adjacent to existing park units), and given the additional fact that neither Congress nor the agency was willing to expend more than a token amount to protect these areas, agency officials were primarily concerned with the protection of areas fairly distant from the Mount McKinley and Denali park units.

But on at least two occasions, NPS personnel were actively deployed to protect park resources. The first was in response to the mid-January 1979 “Great Denali Trespass” (see Chapter 8), while the other was the stationing of four Alaska Task Force rangers who spent ten days at Lake Minchumina (just west of the national monument boundaries) at the beginning of the 1979 hunting season.²⁰⁶

The lands battle of the 1970s culminated with President Carter’s signing of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in December 1980. That bill called for the expansion of

During the late 1970s, in an effort to quantify backcountry use impacts, park staff initiated studies on the effects of hikers and horses on park vegetation. Joe Van Horn, above, collected data from an experimental trampling plot near park headquarters. NPS Interp. Collection, #2823, Denali National Park and Preserve



Denali National Park and the establishment of a new Denali National Preserve, with most of the newly-designated acreage included in the former Denali National Monument. Congress stated that the park additions and preserve would “be managed largely with natural resource values in mind.” Congress asked the NPS, among its goals, “to protect and interpret the entire mountain massif, and additional scenic mountain peaks and formations; and to protect habitat for, and populations of fish and wildlife including, but not limited to, brown/grizzly bears, moose, caribou, Dall sheep, wolves, swans and other waterfowl.”²⁰⁷

Resource personnel were in no position to reach out to the new national monument lands during the 1978-1980 period, but after President Carter signed ANILCA into law, Dalle-Molle recognized the need to expand the park’s knowledge base, both of longstanding “old park” issues and, in addition, a broad range of natural resource issues in the new park and preserve.

These needs were addressed in the park’s first resource management plan, which was issued in draft form in April 1982. The plan, directed by Resource Management Specialist John Dalle-Molle, recommended 14 natural resource projects for completion during the 1983 to 1987 fiscal years, inclusive. Foremost among the park’s needs was a bear-human conflict management study, followed by a study of the impact of traffic on the park road to adjacent wildlife populations. Additional project statements called for studies of the decline of the Denali caribou herd, for the monitoring and protection of the park’s

wolf population, and for continued large mammal surveys.²⁰⁸

Less than a year after the completion of the resource management plan, Denver Service Center staff “began in earnest” to work on a Congressionally-designated general management plan (GMP) for the park and preserve. (See Chapter 9). The draft GMP, released in March 1985, stated that the agency was “continuously expanding its resource management program,” the intent of which was “to understand the natural forces that shape Denali’s environment and to avoid or eliminate activities that significantly interfere with natural processes.” Recognizing that there was “a growing concern about the impacts of increasing visitor use,” the draft plan spotlighted one resource study—which showed the impact of road traffic on the park’s wildlife (see below)—and used it to propose a change in overall park access policy. Other natural resource studies that were “currently underway” included annual wildlife surveys, a declining caribou herd study, wolf pack monitoring, two different bear studies, a vegetation trampling study, and studies of both moose and Dall sheep. The context of those studies was presented in additional discussions, particularly as they related to caribou, bears, and wolves.²⁰⁹ After the issuance of the draft plan, the public provided an extensive number of comments, resulting in the issuance of a revised draft (in December 1985) and a final plan (in November 1986). The section pertaining to natural resource management, however, was largely unchanged from language that had been presented in the draft plan.²¹⁰

This early 1980s “problem” bear was tranquilized and transported from the backcountry to the park road for relocation by aircraft to a remote area. NPS Interp. Collection, #1815, Denali National Park and Preserve



Two studies that began in the early 1980s brought significant changes to how the park was managed. In 1981, regional personnel asked two biologists, Francis (Frank) Singer and Joan Beattie, to make a new study of the impact of road traffic on the park’s wildlife populations. As noted above, Diane Tracy had addressed this topic during the 1973-1975 period, but a 50 percent growth in road traffic since 1972 suggested the need for a renewed effort. The Singer-Beattie study, initially released in March 1984, concluded that traffic increases between 1974 and 1981 had not had a significant impact on wildlife populations observed between the park headquarters and Eielson Visitor Center. Increased traffic, however, had caused many moose and bears to avoid using the road corridor. The authors further noted that additional traffic increases—which would perforce shorten the spacing between vehicles—might eventually disrupt the migrations of caribou and sheep herds. They further recognized that wildlife typically exerted more avoidance behavior for private vehicles (whose occupants often stopped, got out, and approached animals) than for buses (whose occupants remained inside). Based on the results of their study, agency officials who were preparing the general management plan recognized that the best way to allow increased park visitation while also reducing human-caused impacts on park wildlife was to reduce private vehicle traffic but allow a modest increase in bus traffic. These changes proved controversial, but they were implemented in the park’s final (November 1986) general management plan.²⁰

The other major study focused on how to more effectively manage the park’s bear population. As noted above, the boom in park visitation—and more particularly, visitation to the park’s backcountry—had resulted in an upsurge in bear incidents, relocations, and deaths, plus with a concomitant growth in bear-caused human injuries and property damage. NPS officials reacted to the problem, as noted above, by educating park visitors, closing backcountry areas as needed, relocating or destroying problem bears, installing bearproof garbage cans, and by fencing and later closing the remaining garbage dump. But as park staff noted, “overall problems did not decline,” and problems were particularly acute in the backcountry due to an “inability of campers to secure their food.”²¹

To counter the problem, staff recognized that the “total elimination of unnatural food rewards and management of human use” had to be the first priorities. So the park, during the summer of 1982, began hiring biological technicians to address bear-human conflict management. These seasonals stepped up efforts to get backcountry users to apply bear avoidance techniques, and they visited with park inholders and adjacent landowners, both to teach bear-safe practices and to help design bearproof facilities. Park staff in 1982 decided to stop relocating bears; they noted that the technique was not only ineffective but that it altered the bears’ social and genetic integrity. And that same year, staff began testing a portable, bearproof plastic food container. Early models required modifications, but improved

Dall sheep are vulnerable to traffic disturbance and predators in areas where their seasonal migration routes cross the park road. This situation provides visitors on buses with an uncommon viewing opportunity. Brad Ebel Photo



models followed soon afterward, and by 1986, Dalle-Molle reported that “containers have proven very effective in reducing problems and visitor acceptance of them has been very high.” In 1987 the news was even more optimistic; the superintendent noted that “for the first time since the early 1970s, no backpackers lost food to bears, and the numbers of incidents were the lowest in 12 years.” And because the number of incidents decreased, fewer bear-caused area closures were needed.²¹³ Given the large numbers of both bears and visitors in Denali, the bear-human interac-

tion problem was by no means solved; substantial progress, however, was being made.

Biological Research, 1986 to Present

The park’s general management plan, released in late 1986, stated that the primary document guiding future research at the park would continue to be the resource management plan, which was “reviewed at least once each year and are updated as necessary.” Park staff hoping to expand on their knowledge base tried to stimulate as much research as funds allowed.²¹⁴



During the development of bear resistant food containers for backpackers, park staff field tested different container styles. John Dalle-Molle Photo, NPS, Denali National Park and Preserve

Park Service personnel, at this time, were fortunate that biologists from other agencies were already well underway with long-term studies of the area's megafauna. Beginning in the mid-1970s, Wayne Heimer (later assisted by Sarah Watson) had been studying the Dall sheep populations of the Alaska interior. Both were biologists working for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.²¹⁵ In 1980, U.S. Forest Service biologist Vic Van Ballenberghe began studying the area's moose population, both within the park boundary and in areas to the north and east.²¹⁶ The ADF&G efforts continued until the late 1980s; Van Ballenberghe—though now retired—is still an active researcher in the park.²¹⁷

In conjunction with the various long-term megafauna studies, park staff since the 1980s have continued, sometimes in conjunction with state fish and game officials, to take censuses and otherwise monitor the park's wildlife populations. Park records indicate that sheep, wolves, brown and black bears, moose and caribou have been the subject of either ground or aerial monitoring over the years.²²²

For the first time since the 1960s, when Adolph Murie had made pioneering studies, research took place on other park species as well. Beginning in 1984, Phillip Schempf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, concerned about pesti-



Field experiments with grizzly bears were conducted to test the effectiveness of different types of bear resistant food containers. NPS Interp. Collection, #5445, Denali National Park and Preserve

The Park Service, as noted above, began its own studies in 1984, when it asked biologist Francis Singer to conduct a three-year study of the declining Denali caribou herd. The importance of these animals was sufficiently great, however, that Layne Adams—who replaced Singer in 1986—is still actively engaged in caribou research at the park.²¹⁸ In 1986, just a year after major wolf poaching incident at the western end of the park, the agency asked Dr. David Mech, an internationally recognized authority on wolves from Minnesota, to begin a comprehensive wolf research project at the park.²¹⁹ And in 1991 the agency began funding a new study, headed by Jeff Keay, about the park's grizzly bear population.²²⁰ Research into all three of these species continued for more than a decade. Regarding most of the park's megafauna species, continued research and monitoring is an ongoing endeavor.²²¹

cide contamination, began a study of interior Alaska merlins (a species of Holarctic falcon), and in 1987-88 park staff began to inventory and monitor the park's raptors (golden eagles and gyrfalcons).²²³ Both the merlin and raptor studies have continued to the present day, and in 2002, efforts were made to locate the nesting areas of trumpeter swans and other waterfowl.²²⁴ Christmas bird counts, first made in the 1960s, have continued to the present day, although Denali Foundation staff, starting in 1992, have taken a leading role in this effort.²²⁵ Small mammal research took place in 1996 with a study on voles, with much broader studies being undertaken as part of the park's long-term ecological monitoring program (see below).²²⁶ Plant studies, during the 1980s, were primarily related to an analysis of vegetation-trampling impacts and of the Setchell willow, both of which had been first addressed by

Caribou researcher Layne Adams is shown radiocollaring a mature caribou bull, enclosed in a net sling in preparation for weighing. The overall goal of the caribou study is to understand the population dynamics of a naturally-regulated caribou herd. One aspect of the project studies caribou bulls to gain an understanding of their survival patterns and seasonal distribution. Troy Cambier Photo



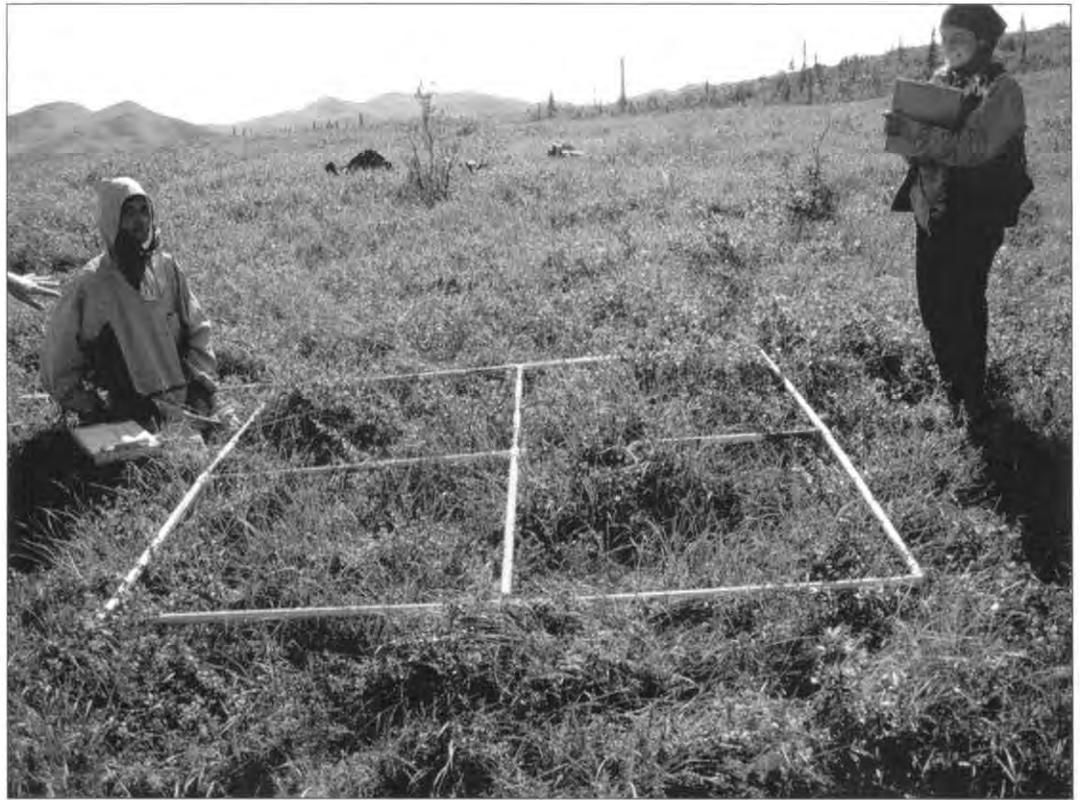
CPSU researchers during the 1970s.²²⁷ But in 1991, park staff were able to undertake “base line data gathering of vegetation types and densities,” and later that decade, in conjunction with the park’s long-term ecological monitoring program, “major strides” were made in expanding the park’s floristic inventory.²²⁸

Creating an Inventory and Monitoring Network
In order to broaden the agency’s biological expertise and sustain the park’s ecological integrity, managers recognized the necessity to inventory the park’s key resources and then, at regular intervals, to monitor the condition of those resources. In 1991, the agency (at the national

Park biologists John Burch (left) and Tom Meier radio-collared this wolf near the Teklanika River in November 2007. Burch and Meier started the wolf research project in 1986 under the direction of L. David Mech and Layne Adams. Monitoring of the Denali wolf population has been continuous for 21 years and the project is now part of the Central Alaska Inventory & Monitoring Network. Troy Cambier Photo



Researchers document plant species composition and structure as part of Denali's long-term vegetation monitoring program. Monitoring sites are re-visited every seven years to allow detection of trends in the vegetation cover. NPS Photo



level) offered a special initiative, with sufficient funding to provide for an inventory and monitoring program at four parks nationwide. Denali was chosen as one of those parks. Park managers recognized the practical impossibility of obtaining a detailed inventory for an entire six-million-acre park unit, so their application specified three watersheds for their long-term environmental monitoring (LTEM) work; within those watersheds, plans called for geology, soils, air, climate, glaciers, vegetation, wildlife, and human use to be monitored on permanent plots that would be established within each watershed. By January 1992, these three watersheds were increased to five, with initial emphasis placed on the South Fork of Moose Creek, but by June 1992, economy and accessibility dictated that the Rock Creek watershed (which was not one of the five initially selected) would be the primary area of interest. Field work in that watershed commenced in the summer of 1992.²²⁹

During the early-to-mid 1990s, when the park's LTEM program was being established and going through its initial development stages, the park was gaining an increasing number of staff with a resources background. Gordon Olson, during this period, became the park's first Chief of Resources (and prior to his arrival, resources staff had been supervised by the chief ranger or management assistant). At various times either Joe Van Horn or Olson incorporated monitoring program leadership into their other responsibilities. Penny Knuckles, in May 1996, became the

program's first full-time coordinator. Other park resource staff that played a key role during this period included Phil Brease, Carol McIntyre, and Pam Sousanes.

Although the various resource management staff had a variety of ongoing projects, the establishment of the LTEM program had the practical effect of concentrating interest geographically in the Rock Creek watershed, and particularly during the program's first three years, most LTEM efforts took place in or near that watershed. In addition, program leaders reached out to a variety of research partners: these included universities (primarily in Fairbanks), federal and state agencies, and privately-funded research groups. And within the NPS, those who helped compile studies for the program included not only full-time staff (both in Anchorage and at the park) but also permanent, seasonal, and volunteer technicians. Sometimes these partners relied on funding supplied by the NPS (and later by the National Biological Survey or the U.S. Geological Survey), but in other cases they supplied funding from their own institutions and worked through cooperative agreements and other partnering arrangements.

As the LTEM program matured, the staff affiliated with the program recognized that a geographical concentration on a single area offered a relatively limited research horizon. This was particularly true for those involved in the studies of glaciers or aquatic invertebrates, neither of

which was well represented in the Rock Creek watershed. During the mid-to-late 1990s, therefore, most research studies broadened their focus and selected monitoring sites that were scattered throughout the park unit.²³⁰

The program, which had received fairly modest funding (\$350,000 or less per year) during the early- to mid-1990s, substantially increased its budget in fiscal year 1998, which allowed a proliferation of new studies. Then, in 1999, the NPS announced a new initiative, called the Natural Resource Challenge, that promised even more funds for the agency's biological programs. The five-year program provided a coordinated, system-wide approach to natural resource management and provided first-year base funding of \$14,320,000 (nationally) to help accelerate completion of natural resource inventories, target efforts to eradicate non-native species, and improve current management and expertise of biological and geological resources.²³¹

The late 1990s brought increased funding to the park's inventory and monitoring efforts. It also, however, was a period in which park managers became increasingly sensitive to the notion that because the park's ecological issues could not be neatly separated from those of the world beyond park borders, the agency's inventory and monitoring efforts should not be conducted in isolation from those of other, nearby areas. In 1997, the national LTEM program's annual report recognized the need to "enhance national

and global monitoring networks." The Natural Resource Challenge, unveiled in 1999, envisioned 32 such networks spread across the country, and by the close of that year, the agency was shifting "from a model of intensive and comprehensive monitoring at the park level to a more extensive effort at the network level." In Alaska, Denali joined the Wrangell-St. Elias and Yukon-Charley Rivers park units to become the Central Alaska Inventory and Monitoring Network (CAKN). After that point, funding of the park's LTEM program was contingent on the fulfillment of goals that emphasized the increased integration of the Denali program into the network concept. By the late summer of 2003, that integration was complete.²³²

New Directions in Natural Resource Management

In recent years, park scientists have undertaken research into a number of fields that had previously been overlooked. No measurements of air quality, for example, had been made prior to the 1980s, but perhaps UNESCO's selection of the park, in 1976 as a biosphere reserve, plus the park's consideration as a World Heritage Site, made the agency more aware that air quality was a valuable park resource. In 1980, the National Atmospheric Deposition Program established its first Alaska monitoring station in the park, and by 1987 park staff were also monitoring particulates, visibility, and criteria pollutants. The park's sole monitoring station, at that time, was located on a ridgeline just above headquarters, but in 1998,



The Permafrost weather station is one of five Long-term Ecological Monitoring (LTEM) weather stations installed in 1994 to record long-term variations in climate at different elevations. The station, which is powered by a deep-cycle battery and charged with a solar panel, measures and records air temperature, relative humidity, wind speed and direction, and solar radiation. The site is located in the Rock Creek drainage adjacent to park headquarters where water and air quality, vegetation, and small mammals are also monitored as part of the Central Alaska Inventory & Monitoring Network. NPS Photo

Fire management program goals include the investigation of vegetation plots focusing on plant succession after a wildland fire. The program is supported during the summer by a contract helicopter, which is also used by other park programs. George Hook Photo



action related to the proposed Healy Clean Coal Project (see Chapter 9) resulted in new temporary monitoring stations both north and south of the park. During the past decade, the quality of air measurements in the park has become increasingly sophisticated.²³³

Fire-related issues also assumed prominence. As noted above, fires had been a significant threat during the first few years of park administration, and they had remained a significant source of worry in later years, for two reasons: sparks from passing steam locomotives had a high potential for starting wildland fires, and park residences that were built of wood and heated by wood and coal stoves were vulnerable to destruction by fire. Park records show several instances of fires caused under both circumstances.²³⁴ And as noted in Chapter 8, the September 1972 fire that destroyed the McKinley Park Hotel had impacts on park visitors for years afterward. In general, however, fire was a minor factor in “old park” management; some years witnessed no fires of any consequence, while in other years, wildland fires—some of them covering tens of thousands of acres—burned for days and then died without an impact on visitors, structures, or staff.²³⁵

Studies of the role of fire in park ecology began with Steve Buskirk’s 1976 historical chronicle of park fires. At that time, the NPS still had a decentralized approach to fire management. But just a year later, the agency adopted a new policy that more fully standardized fire policy. In central

Alaska, fire policy had long been under the aegis of the Bureau of Land Management’s Alaska Fire Control Service, primarily because the BLM controlled the lion’s share of the state’s rural land. That control remained throughout the 1970s. But in recognition of the increasing complexity of Alaska land ownership, officials recognized that a multi-agency effort was in order. Beginning in the late 1970s, therefore, the park’s resource manager worked with the Alaska Interagency Fire Management Council (an ad hoc group of state, Native, and other federal fire managers) on the Tanana-Minchumina Fire Management Plan for areas north of the Alaska Range. This plan was completed in 1982. Soon afterward, the council launched an effort to complete a similar plan for other areas in the state, and in 1986 officials completed an interagency fire management plan for the Mat-Su area. Procedures outlined in these plans marked a significant departure from previous attitudes toward fire. Whereas BLM managers typically had adopted a “hit ‘em all, hard and fast” fire philosophy, the plans produced during the 1980s were more nuanced; they established a four-tiered system requiring managers to gauge the intensity of fire response, primarily in response to distance from population centers. Fires in “critical” areas, therefore, would demand an immediate, large-scale response; but at the other end of the spectrum, fires in “limited action” areas, would be assessed and periodically monitored but not actively fought. The vast majority of acreage in the park and preserve was declared a “limited action” area.²³⁶

By the time ANILCA became law, NPS officials had made it known—both to their BLM counterparts and other Alaska fire management officials—that fire management was much more than mere suppression. Instead, it was (as historian Hal Rothman has noted) “a complete process that included prevention, presuppression, suppression, and prescribed fire, all in the service of larger resource management goals.”²³⁷ In practical terms, that meant that the NPS planned to develop prescribed fire management capabilities in all of the newly-designated park units, but for the time being, at least, NPS personnel were not responsible for day-to-day fire fighting responsibilities. But NPS officials recognized that the “larger management goals” demanded the accumulation of data regarding cabin locations (both on inholder properties and on federal land), and it also demanded the capability of gathering vegetation and similar information during a fire event or in its immediate wake. In 1981, therefore, the agency was able to procure helicopter services for these purposes. The craft was deployed that summer at various Interior parks, including Denali, Yukon-Charley, and perhaps elsewhere.²³⁸

Late in 1981, NPS Director Russ Dickenson committed the Service to a new operations analysis and budget management process called FIREPRO, the agency’s fire program management system. This system, which tried to address the financial demands of the new fire management structure, sought to protect cultural and natural

resources by assessing the level of risk to each and deploying resources based on that risk. Under that system, park managers obtained a helicopter for the summer of 1982, and for the next several years it continued to be involved in the cabin inventory, in fire-related vegetation mapping, and in creating and maintaining “defensible space” perimeters around cabins through hazardous fuel reduction. But as Rothman has noted, FIREPRO’s core funding account “was designed to be used only for emergency funding, but the efforts of adept administrators created a situation in which national parks used these funds in lieu of their regular budgets.” At Denali, fire management funds have underwritten park helicopter services each summer since the 1980s. These helicopters have performed a variety of services, the highest priority of which have been direct responses to fire management needs. But from time to time, helicopters have been used for other purposes as time and resources have allowed.²³⁹

The park continues to provide an active fire management program, although the “FIREPRO” designation disappeared shortly after 2000. In 1998, Alaska’s fire managers, who by now were called the Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group, abandoned their previous reliance on the various regional plans that had been prepared during the 1980s; given the need to standardize fire responses throughout the state, they hammered out the *Alaska Interagency Wildland Management Plan*, which has been their primary guiding document



In support of fire management program goals, a fire technician reduces vegetation from around the Sushana Ranger Patrol Cabin to prepare an area that is defensible in the event of wildland fire. NPS Photo

ever since. Within the National Park Service, fire management in Alaska is guided by three separate teams; the Western Alaska Area Fire Management Team, which guides operations for six park units, is headquartered at Denali. Park-specific fire management is guided by the park's fire management plan, which was completed in October 2004.²⁴⁹

Another new management area concerned exotic plant removal. In 1922, Horace Albright had noted that "foreign plant and animal life are not to be brought in" to the parks, and the agency's *Fauna No. 1*, published in 1933, recommended the reduction or eradication of exotic plant and animal species in the parks. Managers, however, recognized that, at least in some park areas, "exotic plants ... have been carried to practically every corner of the park."²⁴¹ Various prewar botanical compilations at Mount McKinley (including Ynez Mexia, Aven and Ruth Nelson, Louise Murie, etc.) made no special mention of exotic species. In the late 1940s, staff who were asked about exotics in the park noted that Squirreltail grass, or foxtail barley (*Hordeum jubatum*), which had been identified earlier, was "showing evidence of rapid spread" at park headquarters, near the park hotel, and along the park highway. In response to the park's complaint, the agency's assistant chief forester cautioned that the grass, while weedy, was "a native species apparently indigenous to Alaska." He nevertheless suggested several control options, foremost of which was "seeding with any of the perennial wheatgrasses (*Agropyron* spp.), which are often sufficiently aggressive to gradually kill out the Squirreltail grass."²⁴²

In the years that followed, exotic plants spread in many of the nation's park units. By 1967, thirty parks had active programs to eradicate or control exotic plant species, and an agency policy handbook published in 1970 declared that nonnative plants and animals would be "eliminated where it is possible to do so by approved methods." An NPS scientist with extensive Alaska experience declared, in 1980, that most parks had exotic species.²⁴³ Park officials, however, made no move to combat exotic species until the winter of 1998-99, when vegetation technician Jean Balay launched "Operation Dead Dandelion," a volunteer-based effort to eradicate dandelions from the park road corridor. Balay, and those that followed in later years, recognized that dandelion seeds spread with the movement of automobile tires. Because they had the potential to crowd out native plants, an orchestrated effort was needed to prevent "a yellow line continually from the park entrance to Kantishna."²⁴⁴ Activity subsided after 1999, but since 2002 crews have been an annual phenomenon. Most efforts have been focused near the east end of the park road (although a 2002 crew went all the way west to the Kantishna Airstrip), and volunteers have also concentrated on areas recently disturbed by construction activities. Dandelions have been the primary target species in recent years, although in 2003 and 2004, crews removed sweet clover (*Melilotus albus*), tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*), narrow-leaved hawksbeard (*Crepis tectorum*), and smooth hawksbeard (*Crepis capillaries*) from the park's sewage lagoon and Riley Creek campground.²⁴⁵



Led by Vegetation Technician Wendy Mahovlic, right, this crew of volunteers in the Kantishna area eradicated dandelion plants by hand pulling. Exotic species such as these dandelions are not native to the park and can dominate the revegetation of disturbed areas, increasing the difficulty for native species to become established in an area. NPS Photo

Susi Tomsich, a University of Alaska Fairbanks geology undergraduate, found the first dinosaur track in Denali National Park and Preserve, a theropod footprint in the Cantwell Formation. Tomsich, above, sits near two hadrosaur tracks, one on each side of the rock hammer. These represent a second type of dinosaur found in the park, the prey of theropods, providing evidence of past ecosystems. NPS Photo



Recent years have also brought forth a new focus on the park's paleontological resources. Paleontological specimens were first collected by early USGS investigators, such as Alfred Brooks and Stephen Capps, and researchers during the 1950s found additional evidence. The park museum received its first paleontological accessions in 1959 and by 1987, 117 items (plants, mammals, corals, invertebrates, and petrified wood) had been accessioned into the park museum.²⁴⁶ Few elicited much notice. But in the late 1990s, a Bucknell University geology professor, Jeff Trop, located fossilized, prehistoric pollen grains in the Cantwell Formation, and an analysis of that pollen (by Art Sweet of the Geological Survey of Canada) reconfirmed earlier reports that the formation was laid down prior to the dinosaur extinction, and not from the more recent Cretaceous period as had once been hypothesized.

In June 2005, new evidence surfaced. The University of Alaska Fairbanks Department of Geology and Geophysics was in the field as part of its undergraduate field mapping course, and on June 27 Susi Tomsich, a student under the guidance of UAF professor Paul McCarthy, discovered the track of a theropod (a large, bird-like meat eater) near Sable Pass. And later that summer, a second theropod footprint, along with the tracks of various prehistoric wading birds, was discovered on Double Mountain by a team from the NPS, the Dallas Museum of Natural History, and the University of Wyoming.²⁴⁷ Researchers returned to the park in 2007, and in the Sable Mountain area

discovered additional theropod prints, hadrosaur prints, and bird tracks, plus preserved worm burrows and insect-fish trace fossils.²⁴⁸

Continuing scientific efforts have also been mustered to provide answers to the long-term issue of the road's impacts on park wildlife. During the 1973-75 period (see above), Diane Tracy had first analyzed this problem, and during the early 1980s research by Frank Singer and Joan Beattie revisited this problem and made recommendations that became a key component of the park's general management plan. In 1988, agency biologist Dale Taylor began working with the park's bus drivers on a project to collect data "on the effects of park road traffic on the visibility of park wildlife;" this data collection has continued each summer since that time. (Volunteer drivers recorded the number of the various megafauna species on their westbound trips, after which they summarized their data and compared them to those of previous years.)²⁴⁹ Later, in 1995, park staff compiled a pilot study on interactions between traffic and wildlife. This was also the first year of a three-year study showing the effect of vehicle traffic on Dall sheep migrations in the park. Later, in 2003, the park's bus drivers were enlisted to gather data on this topic.²⁵⁰

In 2005, park staff began to plan a large, multidisciplinary study of the impacts of traffic levels of the Denali park road on wildlife, visitor experience, road maintenance and the physical and biological environment of the road corridor. The



Buses on the Denali Park road stop to allow visitors a chance to observe wildlife. Traffic stops, like the one pictured, occur frequently on the park road, and the current park road capacity study is working to determine how congestion associated with these stops might affect wildlife behavior and a visitor's experience. NPS Photo

study began the following year and will continue beyond 2007. Its goal is to determine the road's carrying capacity based on traffic flow, visitor experience and wildlife movements and observations. Officials, recognizing the need to address any anticipated impacts if road traffic were to be increased, plan to write an environmental impact statement about the issue. Pending funding decisions, however, that document has yet to be written. Plans call for experimental increases in traffic on alternate days to determine adverse effects if the evaluation in the document anticipates acceptable impacts.²⁵¹

Mount McKinley's Height: New Studies, Greater Accuracy

Scientific inquiry during the 1980s attempted to provide the most accurate possible answer to the question, "How high is North America's tallest peak?" Given the growing sophistication of measurement technology, this elevation has changed considerably over the years.

As noted in Chapter 1, prospector William A. Dickey named Mount McKinley in 1896. The following January, a New York newspaper story stated that Dickey had estimated the mountain's elevation to be "over 20,000 feet." In 1898, topog-

rapher Robert Muldrow of the U.S. Geological Survey ascended the Susitna River with George H. Eldridge. Using a stadia line and transit, he calculated the mountain's height from six different locations. Using a weighted mean of those measurements, he stated that the peak's "adopted height" was 20,464 feet.²⁵²

Four years later, geologist Alfred H. Brooks and topographer De Witt L. Reaburn led an expedition to areas south, west, and north of Mount McKinley. Reaburn made four additional vertical-angle measurements, with the mean height of 20,155 feet; he then averaged his figures with those of Muldrow's six measurements from 1898 and determined a new mountain elevation of 20,309 feet. Seven years later, H. W. Rhodes from the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey took two additional measurements of the mountain from Cook Inlet. Although both of his observation points were more than 125 miles from Mount McKinley, his instruments were more accurate than those available to USGS field personnel. In a 1910 report, agency official William Bowie noted that the two measurements were 20,274 feet and 20,322 feet. He concluded that the weighted mean was 20,300 feet, and that this value was "correct within 150 feet." Brooks and other USGS

Bradford Washburn conducted extensive surveying and mapping during the "Operation White Tower" expedition that climbed Mt. McKinley. He spent an unprecedented ninety days on the mountain in 1947. Operation White Tower Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



officials, in a 1911 publication, accepted Bowie's 20,300-foot elevation as being correct.²⁵³

For the next 45 years, the mountain's official height remained 20,300 feet. But as noted in Chapter 13, Bradford Washburn began showing an interest in the mountain during the mid-1930s, and he first climbed it in 1942. Five years later, he returned to the mountain and conducted extensive survey work, including tripod measurements made at the summit, and in 1951, he and his crew surveyed much of the West Buttress route. Based on those efforts, and additional measurements in 1954, the National Geographic Society (which had been sponsoring Washburn, off and on, for twenty years) announced in August 1956 that "based on more than ten years of surveys of the mountain ... the United States Geological Survey had officially declared McKinley to be 20,320 feet."²⁵⁴ Perhaps in response to this announcement, a number of publications adopted this new height. But the USGS did not, and government officials for another twenty years, perhaps longer, reiterated that "the official height of the mountain is still 20,300 feet."²⁵⁵

In June 1977, the National Outdoor Leadership School launched an expedition up the mountain with the express purpose of determining the mountain's height. Expedition members hauled 33 prisms up the mountain. They reached the summit on July 11, and shortly afterward, Brad

Washburn—who worked from Eielson Visitor Center and several nearby sites—shot a series of laser beams at the prisms and recorded the results. A week later, Washburn announced that the new measurement showed that the peak's altitude was "within a foot or so" of the accepted 20,300-foot figure. He stated that "we may come up with a slight change in altitude, but I think it's very close." The USGS made no changes as a result of these measurements; this may have been because (as later reported), "McKinley exerts enough gravitational pull to distort standard surveying techniques."²⁵⁶ Shortly afterward, however, USGS personnel apparently concluded that Mount McKinley's official height was 20,320 feet (as Washburn had indicated in the mid-1950s) rather than 20,300 feet.

A renewed attempt to measure the mountain's height took place in early June 1989, when a scientific team, sponsored by the U.S. Geological Survey and the University of Alaska Anchorage, headed toward the summit carrying a Global Positioning System receiver. The researchers and support climbers reached the top on June 21 and used the receiver in conjunction with a Global Positioning Satellite. The technology could purportedly "convert satellite signals into measurements to the nearest 5 millimeters" (or one-fifth of an inch). By late July, the scientists had determined that Mount McKinley's summit elevation was 20,306 feet, plus or minus six inches. But

USGS officials, noting inconsistencies in their gravitational measurements, did not officially accept the new figure because it was insufficiently comprehensive to warrant a change. Given the inconclusive results of the data collection effort, the peak's official height remains 20,320 feet.²⁵⁷

Cultural Resource Issues at Mount McKinley National Park

The Congressional bill that established Mount McKinley National Park, in 1917, made no specific identification of the park's cultural resources nor of any particular need to protect them. This, combined with the fact that the NPS, as an organization, was slow to heed the language in the Organic Act that called for the agency "to conserve the ... historic objects ... therein," meant that little attention was paid to cultural resource concerns. Practicality prevailed.

Perhaps the first efforts to protect historical values began in 1932, when Supt. Harry Liek headed down the Toklat River and took photographs of the cabin where Charles Sheldon and Harry Karstens had lived during their visit to the area in 1907-08. The following summer, Liek returned to the "old Sheldon cabin," which was still standing, "for the purpose of taking measurements and pictures for use in restoration." Liek continued his interest in later years.²⁵⁸

No work was done, however, and when Supt. Been visited in 1941, he noted "the crumbling condition of Charles Sheldon's cabin ... If restoration work is

desirable, it must be done soon." But Adolph Murie, who became familiar with the cabin during his 1939-41 field work, expressed a different point of view. In a 1942 article, he noted that

The cabin he used is now in ruins and the cache is tottering. ... The cabin is deteriorating, a swing of the river may destroy it suddenly, but I have a feeling it should be left alone. I think that Sheldon, with his love for wild places, would like to have his cabin crumble to earth with age.²⁵⁹

The cabin, in fact, did "crumble to earth with age," because by 1959 the cabin was in such ruinous shape that in order to rehabilitate the cabin, it "would have had to be completely reconstructed." And in 1969, the park's chief ranger noted that "the only remains are a few decayed logs which are rapidly melting into the soil" and that the winding Toklat River was now eating at the site of the cabin." Wildlife advocates, by this time, were interested in the cabin's "preservation and interpretation," but the cabin's poor condition, combined with its isolation from the park road, precluded any serious rehabilitation efforts.²⁶⁰

As noted in Chapters 5 and 6, the recently abandoned buildings on the Morino Tract caught the eye of a visiting New York congressman, who hoped that the buildings could "be preserved as an exhibit of ... early Alaskan development and



When Superintendent Frank Been visited the Sheldon Cabin in June 1941, the 34-year-old original cabin and the 1914 addition were both badly deteriorated. DENA 4-5, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

building construction.” That idea soon faded away. Of more sustained interest, however, were the “many articles” that were acquired from the Army’s 1942 test expedition. These, plus scattered items from other sources, constituted the core of the park’s museum collection, and shortly after the military (in the spring of 1943) opened up the park hotel as a rest and recreation site, NPS officials converted an “old office building” at headquarters into a small museum. The museum remained open, off and on, until 1950.²⁶¹

Historical studies commenced at the park during the early 1950s. In May 1951, regional historian Aubrey Neasham visited the park. Perhaps as a result, Supt. Grant Pearson—who by now had been at the park for more than twenty years—be-

Merriam, and Sheldon’s widow, Louisa.²⁶³ A year later, in July 1952, park staff decided to move the plaque honoring Stephen T. Mather—which had been located near the ranger dormitory since being installed in 1934—to “a more prominent position near the Naturalist office.”²⁶⁴ And in 1958, the Pioneers of Alaska members, probably from the Fairbanks Igloo, sponsored the casting of a plaque in memory of Harry Karstens, the pioneering park superintendent who had died in November 1955. On July 27, 1958, a small crowd gathered near the Toklat River bridge, at the same rock wall where the Sheldon marker had been erected eight years earlier. Attending the brief dedication ceremony were several major figures from the park’s early history including concessioner Robert Sheldon, who had been involved in



Constructed in 1926, the original Superintendent’s Office at park headquarters served as the administrative office until mid-1941, when the one-room building was considered “dilapidated.” By the spring of 1943 the building, still in its original location, was adapted for reuse as the park’s first museum. DENA 4-2.7, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

gan writing a park history, and by March 1952 he had completed a draft of it. The 91-page book was completed in 1953, and both Director Conrad Wirth and other agency officials congratulated him because “it is an interesting and suggestive compilation of data presented in something of an informal reporter style.”²⁶²

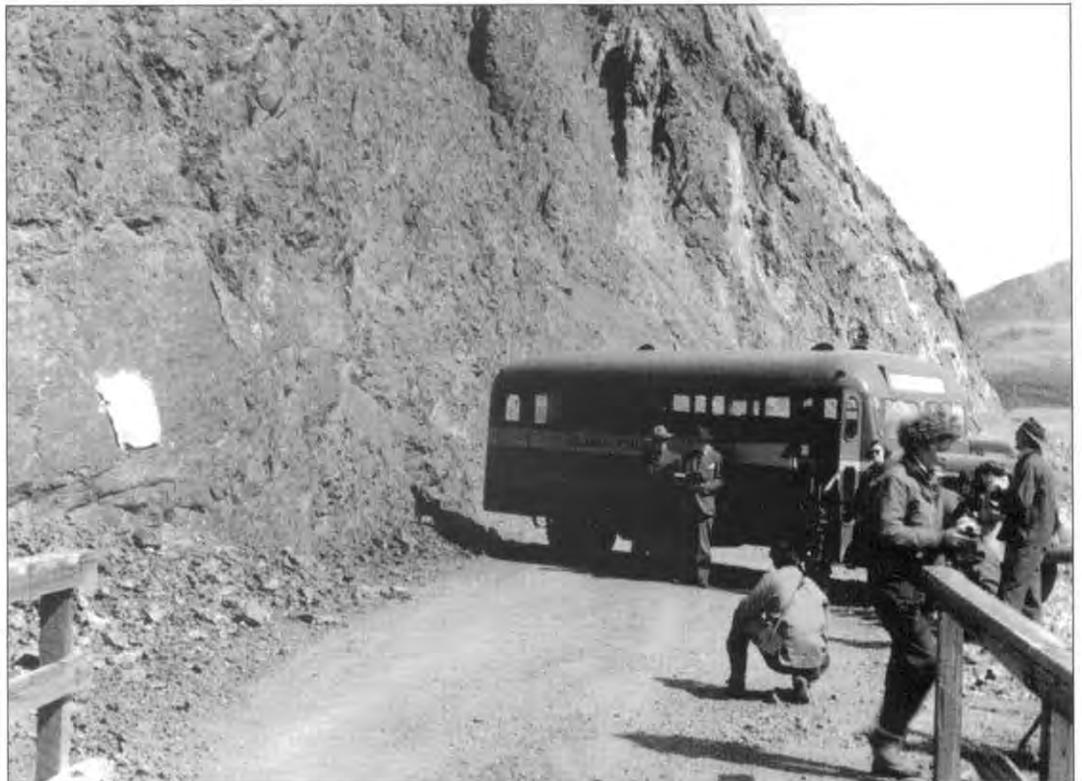
The 1950s also featured the placing of several bronze plaques that memorialized people who had made prominent contributions to the park. In early 1951, the Boone and Crockett Club sent the park a marker commemorating Charles Sheldon, who played such a critical role in the park’s establishment. Park staff reacted by installing it that spring on a rock wall on the east side of the Toklat River bridge, 3.5 miles upstream from Sheldon’s deteriorating cabin. On June 22 a dedication ceremony was held at the plaque; Robert Reeve, the Alaska aviation pioneer, gave a speech to an audience that included NPS Director Arthur Demaray, Regional Director Lawrence

park affairs from the mid-1920s to the early 1940s; former Supt. Grant Pearson, whose work at the park had spanned the years from 1926 to 1956; and Karstens’ widow, Louise, who in the mid-1920s had worked at the park as a \$1-per-month park ranger.²⁶⁵

Interest in the park’s archeological resources began in late 1958, when regional NPS officials wrote to University of Alaska professor Ivan Skarland and invited him to submit bids for a parkwide archeological survey. Skarland, in response, estimated that such a survey would take two field seasons and cost \$18,400. The NPS then sent its regional archeologist, Paul Schumacher, to the park for further consultation, but nothing specific resulted from that visit.²⁶⁶

The first archeological survey work in the park took place in the summer of 1960, after a geological field party stumbled upon two prehistoric sites just north of Teklanika Campground. These

This photograph shows the June 22, 1951 dedication of the plaque commemorating the achievements of Charles Sheldon. In 1958 a plaque was added in memory of Henry (Harry) Karstens. Both plaques are now on display at the Toklat Contact Station, on the west side of the Toklat River. National Archives & Records Administration



sites, later designated Teklanika West and Teklanika East, were soon visited by a University of Alaska anthropology professor, Frederick Hadleigh West, and they were of sufficient interest that the NPS sponsored a field camp for the following summer in which two UA archeologists, Ronald Boyce and Beryl Beard, excavated pits at each of those sites. Additional sites found that summer were located in the vicinity of Double Mountain, Sanctuary River, and Sable Mountain. West, or crews working under his direction, continued to work at Teklanika for the next several years.²⁶⁷

In 1963, UA geographer H. Morris Morgan obtained an NPS contract “to locate additional sites in order to lay the ground work for continuing evaluation of the park’s archeological resources.” In response, he conducted a reconnaissance or preliminary survey which focused on selected high ground areas along the park road corridor between the park hotel and Teklanika Campground. After locating 11 new prehistoric sites, he reported that “for the present, it seems that sufficient archeological surveys have been done in the Park.”²⁶⁸ To follow up on Morgan’s work, UA archeologist Adan Treganza, accompanied by two assistants, arrived at the park in June. Under an NPS contract, Treganza revisited each of Morgan’s 11 sites and located five additional sites, all near the park road and primarily east of Sanctuary River. Treganza, like Morgan, applied less-than-rigorous methodology to his field work; and he similarly concluded that “no further work is recommended for Mount McKinley National

Park as human prehistory appears not to be one of its attributes.” Reports such as these discouraged further investigations, and for more than a decade, the agency sponsored no further survey efforts.²⁶⁹

Preservation values became important in the late 1960s. By 1966, park staff had recognized the need to restore the old Upper Toklat patrol cabin (Pearson Cabin), which rangers Grant Pearson and Lee Swisher had built in 1927. Accordingly, staff hoped that the cabin, along with the nearby dog houses and cache, could be “preserved as a permanent interpretive exhibit typical of those used by protection personnel during the early history of the park.” After some delay, agency architects prepared a historic structures report for the various structures at the site; it called for a restoration of the cabin to its 1928 condition, a rehabilitation of the cache, and a reconstruction of the dog kennels. The cabin work was completed by 1973, and the remainder of the project soon afterward.²⁷⁰ In 1976, the cabin served as a “bicentennial living history demonstration” in which seasonal employees Frank Buono and Steve Carwile played the role of ranger Grant Pearson. An agency report noted that “the Toklat Historic Cabin was lived in and manned daily this summer. ... Visitors viewing these operations and the historic living conditions thoroughly enjoyed it.”²⁷¹

Archeological research resumed during the mid-1970s with two studies conducted just north of



The Teklanika West archeological site is located on a rocky bluff overlooking the wide braided gravel bars of the Teklanika River, a classic lookout site for hunters to observe the movements of game animals. DENA 19-17, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

the park (and on land that would soon become park of the expanded park and preserve). Meanwhile, federal officials moved to protect archeological sites in the park vicinity. Initial cultural resource overviews of the state, which had been conducted in the early 1960s, had failed to identify any nationally-significant archeological or historical sites in or near the park. But in September 1974 the Dry Creek early-man site, located just north of the park, was declared a National Historic Landmark, and in January 1976, the Teklanika Archeological District (an area that included both of the sites discovered in 1960) became the park's first entry into the National Register of Historic Places.²⁷²

Cultural Resource Management at Denali National Park and Preserve

In 1980, Alaska Area Office archeologist Craig Davis, recognizing the almost total dearth of extant archeological knowledge about the areas enclosed within the newly-proclaimed Denali National Monument, spent 25 days in the park and conducted a brief archeological reconnaissance. He recorded 16 new prehistoric sites, primarily lithic scatters on high ground in the Teklanika, Sanctuary, and Savage River drainages. The primary goal of his fieldwork was to gather data for upcoming management plans. Perhaps as a result of that survey, the park's first resource management plan, in April 1982, stated that the park's top cultural resource goal was the compilation of a four-year, \$500,000 cultural resource

inventory; more specifically, it stated that "an immediate need is to complete essentially preliminary site studies and architectural evaluations for critical area resources" such as the Teklanika Archeological District, the headquarters area, and other historic structures. The plan also called for the completion of a historic resources study, which would be primarily based on the results of the first year's inventory work, plus an administrative history, which would be a year-long project to update Pearson's 1953 history.²⁷³

The agency showed no immediate interest in funding any of the park's cultural resource priorities. The approval of a number of smaller projects over several years, however, was a positive response to the park's needs. Beginning in 1982, for example, crews working in the park's fire management program (see above) compiled a remarkable inventory of cabins, both historic and contemporary, and by 1984 information on well over 200 cabins and ruins was available, not only to fire managers but to cultural resource specialists as well. Then, in the spring of 1985, the region's historical architect, Dave Snow, prepared design guidelines for the so-called "Headquarters Historic District." Meanwhile, the agency hired a University of California Santa Barbara graduate student, Gail Evans, for two historical research projects. The first involved the park's older patrol cabins, while the second called for an investigation into the various headquarters buildings. The goal of both efforts was the preparation of

NPS seasonal interpreter Steve Carwile lived and worked at the Pearson Cabin beginning the summer of 1976 and for the full summers of 1977 through 1979, providing site interpretation for park visitors arriving by tour bus. This living history demonstration included two sled dogs at the historic duplex dog houses. DENA 2254, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



National Register of Historic Places nomination forms. Evans's work, remarkably, brought quick results. Her patrol cabins nomination, which included five cabins along the "old park's" northern boundary, five others along the park road, and three near the park's southeastern corner, was accepted in November 1986, while her headquarters-area nomination was entered onto the National Register in October 1987.²⁷⁴

Meanwhile, other projects were being pursued. Given Evans's substantial historical information, Snow worked with archeologist Paul Gleeson and historian Robert Spude on a three-volume historic structure report (HSR), for both the headquarters area and Wonder Lake buildings, which was completed in January 1987. By this time, historian Bill Brown was well underway with a historic resource study. Brown, recognizing

Projects to inventory Denali's cultural resources included the documentation of sites such as this Kantishna Mining District historic lode mining site, referred to as DENA #154, the Alpha Ridge site, consisting of this cabin, a shed, adits, tailings and artifacts. NPS Photo



William E. "Bill" Brown, NPS historian for more than 30 years, spent several years researching and writing Denali's historic resource study, published in 1991. That document was later published as *Denali – Symbol of the Alaskan Wild*, a comprehensive, illustrated history of the park. NPS Photo

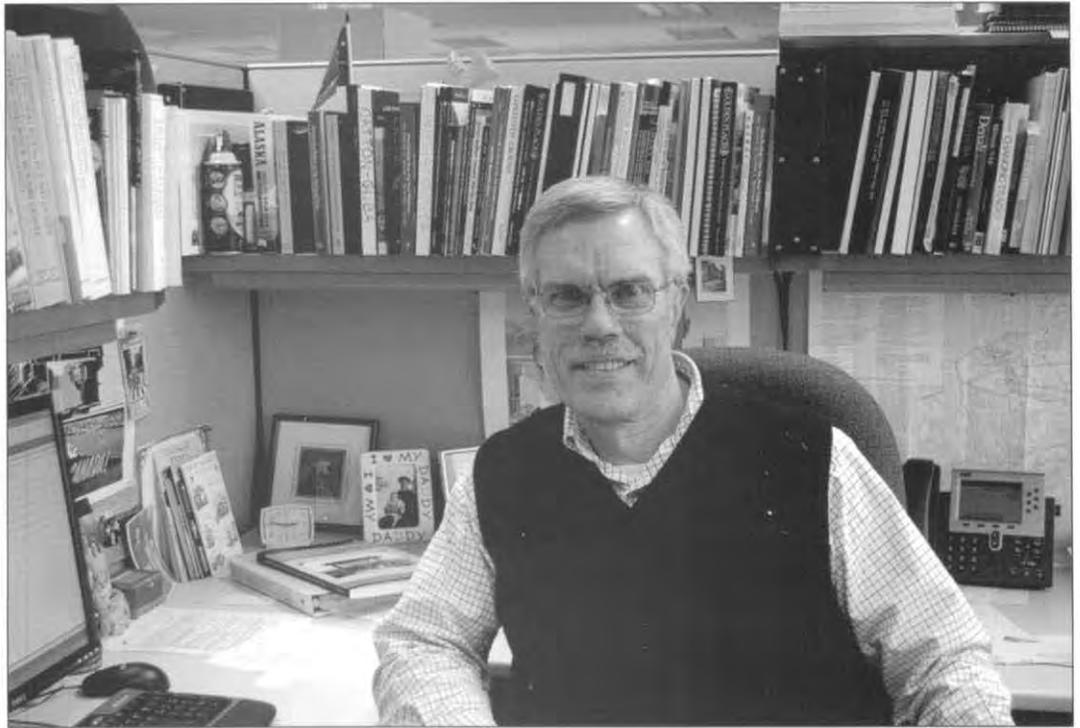


the broad research opportunities available in the various park collections, moved to the park for the duration of his study, which was completed in draft form in 1989. The study was published by the NPS in 1991, and it proved so popular that in 1993, the Alaska Natural History Association produced a reformatted version of Brown's book for popular consumption. Brown's research, valuable as it was for the general information it provided, had a practical side, too. From time to time during the 1980s, the NPS sparred with the park concessioner about the road's design, construction, and maintenance, and also with the State of Alaska over the ownership of the park road (see Chapter 9). When court cases arose in these two matters, the documentation that Brown provided helped buttress the federal government's case.²⁷⁵

During the 1980s, agency staff learned valuable new information about the park's cultural resources through its compliance investigations. These investigations, which responded to proposed development actions, involved both bibliographic research and on-the-ground field work. They were legally sanctioned by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and first implemented at the park in the late 1970s. The preparation of compliance documents, by regional office personnel, remained fairly sporadic

until the mid-1980s. After that point, however, the region's Archeological Resources Management Unit applied compliance more intensely at the park, and hundreds of documents have been generated since that time, and on the basis of that amassed data, Kristen Griffin in 1990 wrote a park archeological overview and assessment. In the mid-1990s, the responsibility for Denali's compliance program shifted from the regional office to the park.²⁷⁶

Given the results of Gail Evans's cabin histories, the agency's architectural staff during the early 1990s began compiling a series of historic structure reports. In 1992, Gail teamed with David Evans on at least two cabin HSRs, and the following year Randall Skeirik worked with Steven Peterson on an HSR for a headquarters-area building. Perhaps six to eight of these reports have been completed to date. And in response to these reports, several historic cabins have been rehabilitated by the park's maintenance staff.²⁷⁷ Because of the structural similarity of the various early patrol cabins, and because of strong working relationships between the regional historical architect's staff and the park's preservation crew, the various initial HSRs have served as an effective template for historic cabin rehabilitation efforts throughout the park. Additional HSRs will be completed as the need arises.²⁷⁸



Frank Norris served as a historian in the NPS's Alaska Regional Office for 17 years. NPS Photo

The Herning cabin, located between Thorofare River and Mount Eielson, received considerable attention from agency staff during this period. This cabin, easily visible from the Eielson Visitor Center, had been part of Harold Herning's claims and had been moved to the site, from Fairbanks, in 1954 (see Chapter 14). But in 1983, Herning's claims had been declared null and void, and in June 1992 park employee Sandra Kogl noted that the cabin was "in extreme disrepair" and "unauthorized use [was] taking place." On that basis, she recommended that the "cabin and its

associated junk should be removed from the viewshed of Eielson Visitor Center. Suggest this be a project for a Sierra Club type of work group." The park's resource chief and the superintendent approved the proposed action, and in response, the January/February 1993 issue of *Sierra Magazine* advertised a Sierra Club "service trip," scheduled for late August 1993, in which the participants would "dismantle an old miner's cabin." But Sandra Faulkner, who served as the agency's Regional Historic Preservation Officer, noted that "this site was associated with several



An NPS employee in Alaska since 1990, Ann Kain served as Denali's first Cultural Resource Manager from 1997 to January, 2008. She facilitated programs in museum collections, archeology, ethnography and historic preservation. NPS Photo



In the early 1920s a small lode mining camp was located at the base of Copper Mountain, later renamed Mt. Eielson. Harold Herning built this cabin on his claims in 1954. This cabin and the remains of the 1920s camp, to the right of the cabin, stand as reminders of historical activities in the Mt. Eielson Mining District. William Weber Collection, Cultural Resources, Denali National Park and Preserve

historic mining claims and both historic and modern tools and equipment are scattered about the area.” Thus, in order to comply with provisions in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, she asked that the site “be surveyed by our mining inventory crew for cultural resources.” Based on that recommendation, a four-person NPS crew spent two days at the site in June 1993. After receiving the crew’s report, the agency’s regional archeologist recommended that no action be taken to the cabin itself; he did, however, suggest the removal of hazardous materials and recent trash from the site. Given that recommendation, the Herning cabin still stands today, although in severely deteriorated condition. Despite a mid-1990s cleanup effort, some debris remains in the cabin’s vicinity.²⁷⁹

Throughout this period, the park’s cultural resources had been managed by personnel who had no specialized background or expertise in a cultural resource field. That need, which had been identified as early as the park’s 1982 resource management plan, was initially addressed with the hiring of Jennifer Wolk as the park’s first museum curator. In 1997 Ann Kain, formerly a historian in the agency’s regional office, was added to the park staff. Kain spent the next decade on the job and played a major role in incorporat-

ing cultural resource concerns into overall park management. During that period, two employees have joined her staff: cultural anthropologist Jane Bryant (who has worked at the park, off and on, since 1967) and museum curator Jane Lakeman, who succeeded Wolk in 2006. Recent cultural resource projects have included an ethnographic overview and assessment, a headquarters-area cultural landscape report, and various culturally-focused exhibits.

Subsistence Issues

As noted in Chapter 8, both Interior Department officials and Congress recognized during the 1970s that most of the new lands that were being considered as NPS units in an Alaska lands bill needed to be open to subsistence uses. Accordingly, the proclamation that President Carter signed in December 1978 to establish Denali National Monument stated that “the opportunity for the local residents to engage in subsistence hunting is a value to be protected and will continue under the administration of the monument.” Consistent with that statement, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act likewise provided that subsistence uses would be sanctioned in all so-called “new park” lands as well as within Denali National Preserve. The bill, however, made no move to sanction subsistence

In January 2007 Florence Collins, center, received the 2006 NPS Summit Award for Lifetime Achievement for her nearly 25 years of guidance and leadership on Denali's Subsistence Resource Commission. The award was presented by Alaska Regional Director Marcia Blaszak, left, and Florence's daughter Julie. NPS Photo



uses within the “old park,” and subsistence uses there remained off limits.

Soon after ANILCA was signed, the Interior Department moved to establish regulations that specified the structure of subsistence activities at Denali and other Alaska park units (see Chapter 9). These regulations were in place by June 1981. What was lacking, however, was a federally-sanctioned commission that could represent local subsistence users. Congress mandated that the members for such a commission needed to be chosen by December 1981 and that, by June 1982, the assembled commission needed to “devise and recommend to the Secretary and the Governor a program for subsistence hunting within the park or park monument.” But for various reasons, the Denali National Park Subsistence Resource Commission was unable to hold its initial meeting until May 1984. Since that time, meetings of this advisory body have been held every six months or so. Florence Collins, a Lake Minchumina (later Fairbanks) resident, guided the SRC from its inception until August 2007; since that time, Ray Collins of McGrath has served as the SRC chair.²⁸⁰

When park officials, during the hectic days following the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, recognized that millions of acres might be added onto Mount McKinley National Park, they tried to gather substantial baseline information about the nature of ongoing subsistence activities. Some of these data

were gathered by field examiners during the 1972-74 period, and a brief (four-page) section on subsistence appeared in the October 1974 *Final Environmental Statement*. To learn more, however, officials contacted Cooperative Park Studies Unit personnel in Fairbanks, and Richard Bishop agreed to investigate subsistence patterns in the areas proposed for inclusion north of the Alaska Range. That study included site visits to, or communications with, residents of Telida, Lake Minchumina, Kantishna, Bearpaw, Nikolai, and Nenana. The study was completed in late 1977 and published a year later.²⁸¹ Just a year later, Dianne Gudgel-Holmes, in a state-sponsored navigability study, provided extensive historical data about the historic use of the Kantishna, Upper Kuskokwim, and Nenana river drainages. On the basis of that expertise, Ms. Gudgel-Holmes then teamed up with William Schneider (from UAF) and park employee John Dalle-Molle on an NPS-sponsored study, published in 1984, that examined historical land use patterns in the “new park” and preserve areas north of the Alaska Range.²⁸²

In the twenty-plus years since the park’s subsistence resource commission began meeting, it has dealt with a welter of issues. Many of its decisions, particularly since the mid-1990s, have been recommendations related to hunting and fishing regulations. To lend perspective to those recommendations, NPS and other agency staff have analyzed the proposal and, at times, conducted research that has either buttressed or

The Fish Lake cabin, seen in this 1995 photograph, played a prominent role in the long history of trapping in the north additions of the park. This site represents the activities and subsistence lifestyle of trappers who made their living in this area. NPS Photo



The NPS monitors the condition of historic resources such as the Fish Lake cabin, pictured here in 2007. NPS Photo



mitigated the SRC's recommendations. Each of these recommendations, in turn, has been voted on by regional advisory council, and later by the Federal Subsistence Board.²⁸³

Beyond this regular round of harvest recommendations, other researchers have completed studies—funded partially or entirely by the NPS—that lend further background to the park's present and historical subsistence patterns. Gud-

gel-Holmes, for example, spent many years on the Kantishna Oral History Project; this included a series of transcribed interviews with elders that took place during both 1982-83 and 1988, and the project also included a history, published in 1991, of Native place names in the Kantishna watershed.²⁸⁴ In 1999, Gudgel-Holmes and two others completed a study examining the traditional use of various structures in the park unit's north additions; that same year, linguist James Kari

produced a draft Native place names mapping study of the park.²⁸⁵

In 2000, the NPS sponsored several community histories under a cooperative agreement with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Division of Subsistence. Longtime SRC member Ray Collins, in September 2000, completed a history of Nikolai and Telida, and three months later, Cantwell resident Brenda Rebne completed a brief history of Cantwell's Native village. That same year, the students and teachers of Minchumina Community School produced a history of Lake Minchumina, and the Tanana Tribal Council produced *A Short History of the Native Village of Tanana*. The park's ethnographic overview and assessment, completed in 2001 by a trio of ethnographers, was also written in response to the state-federal cooperative agreement.²⁸⁶

In order to manage the park subsistence activities, Superintendent Cunningham during the 1980s, asked Ralph Tingey, the park's management assistant, to serve as the NPS liaison to the Denali Subsistence Resource Commission. Tingey retained that role until 1991, when Hollis Twitchell became the park's first specifically-designated subsistence specialist. Twitchell remained on the job for more than a decade. Amy Craver presently manages park subsistence matters.²⁸⁷

A major subsistence-related matter in recent years has concerned the extent to which subsistence ORV access would be allowed in the Windy Creek, Cantwell Creek, and Bull River drainages. Another major subsistence issue has been the proposal to develop a resort along Spruce Creek in the Kantishna Hills, a proposal that would have had severe impacts on the area's subsistence hunting opportunities. These issues are discussed in chapters 10 and 14, respectively.

Notes - Chapter 12

- ¹ Theodore Roosevelt, "The American Hunter-Naturalist," *The Outlook* 99 (December 9, 1911), 856; William E. Brown, *Denali, Symbol of the Alaskan Wild* (Anchorage, Alaska Natural History Association, 1993), 81-86.
- ² Sheldon to Mather, December 15, 1915; Thomas Riggs, Jr. to Mather, December 17, 1915; both in "Proposed National Parks: Mt. McKinley" folder, Box 111, General Records, Central Files, RG 79, NARA CP.
- ³ 64th Congress, 1st Session; H.R. 14775 (April 18, 1916) and S. 5716 (April 22, 1916).
- ⁴ 64th Congress, Public No. 353 (February 26, 1917), in *United States Statutes at Large* 39, p. 938.
- ⁵ Superintendent's Monthly Reports, Mount McKinley National Park (hereafter known as SMR, MOMC), June 1921, 2.
- ⁶ SMR, MOMC, July 1921 through December 1922.
- ⁷ Nelson to Mather, May 7, 1921; Mather to Nelson, June 6, 1921; Karstens to Nelson, May 13, 1922; all in "Wild Animals, Part 1 and 2" file, Box 112 (MOMC), RG 79, NARA CP; SMR, April 1922, 5.
- ⁸ SMR, July 1922, 6, and October 1922, 4; Timothy Rawson, *Changing Tracks; Predators and Politics in Mt. McKinley National Park* (Fairbanks, University of Alaska Press, 2001), 37.
- ⁹ Linda S. Franklin, *Adolph Murie: Denali's Wilderness Conscience* (unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Alaska Fairbanks, May 2004), 21; Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 34.
- ¹⁰ Nelson to Mather, April 13, 1922, in "Wild Animals, Part 1 and 2" file, see above; Margaret E. Murie, *Two in the Far North* (Anchorage, Alaska Northwest, 1978), 78, 80; Jim Rearden, *Alaska's Wolf Man: the 1915-55 Wilderness Adventures of Frank Glaser* (Missoula, Pictorial Histories Publishing, 1998), 83.
- ¹¹ SMR, May 1922, 3; June 1922, 2; July 1922, 2; August 1922, 2, 4.
- ¹² SMR, July 1922, 2, and September 1922, 2; Franklin, *Adolph Murie*, 22, 24, 26; Murie, *Two in the Far North*, 80; Brown, *Denali, Symbol of the Alaskan Wild*, 148-49.
- ¹³ According to the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, August 17, 1922, 1, "a large number of caribou mixed with the herd at different times" during the 1921-22 reindeer drive, "but no harm was done. In the Iditarod region," for example, herders "resorted to lassoing the caribou and tying them up until they had driven the herd on, when they released them."
- ¹⁴ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 92; SMR, August 1922, 2; September 1922, 2; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, October 13, 1923, 2.
- ¹⁵ SMR, October 1924, 3; August 1925, 3, 8-9; Hal G. Evarts, "Game in the Foreground," *Saturday Evening Post* 198 (May 22, 1926), 30-31, 225-30. Karstens, in his December 1925 superintendent's report (p. 4), stated that a "publication" of the park's natural attributes was "now on record at Washington, D.C." No known record of such a publication exists, however.
- ¹⁶ See, for example, SMRs for December 1925, 4-5; April 1926, 4-5; and July 1926, 4-5.
- ¹⁷ A.E. Demaray to T.S. Palmer, December 5, 1924, in "Wild Animals, Part 1 and 2" file, see above.
- ¹⁸ SMR, September 1925, 2; January 1926, 4.
- ¹⁹ Adolph Murie discussed the surfbird in "Wildlife of Mount McKinley National Park," *National Geographic* 104 (August 1953), 252, 269. Supt. Liek, upon hearing of Wright's untimely death in February 1936, noted that scientists had "searched for the surf bird nests for over 150 years and the only one on record is the one found by George Wright." SMR, February 1936, 1.
- ²⁰ Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven, Yale, 1997), 86-87; Russ Olsen, *Administrative History: Organizational Structures of the National Park Service, 1917 to 1985* (Washington?, NPS?, September 1985), 36-37; George M. Wright, Joseph S. Dixon, and Ben H. Thompson, *Fauna of the National Parks of the United States: A Preliminary Survey of Faunal Relations in National Parks*, Fauna Series No. 1 (Washington, GPO, 1933), iv; U.S. Department of the Interior, *Annual Report* (Washington, GPO, 1933), 177; Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 67; SMR, May 1926, 4; SMR, July 1926, 6.
- ²¹ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 92-93; SMR, January 1926, 4; October 1926, 4; October 1927, 2, 7.
- ²² USDI, *Annual Report* for 1927 (p. 145) and 1928 (p. 182).
- ²³ SMR, August 1927, 3; SMR, October 1927, 5, 6; February 1928, 3; January 1929, 3.
- ²⁴ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, pp. 53, 85, and 158 notes that estimates of the park's major animal populations during the 1920s were either poorly-designed or done retrospectively.
- ²⁵ SMR, February 1931, 2 October 1931, 3; February 1933, 3; October 1933, 3; November 1933, 3; September 1936, 5; September 1937, 6; February 1938, 4; October 1938, 4.
- ²⁶ SMR, May 1933, 1; August 1937, 5; September 1937, 6; June 1939, 4; May 1940, 6; June 1940, 5; November 1940, 4; June 1941, 3.
- ²⁷ Acting Director NPS to RD/R4, May 16, 1947, in File 700.01 (Nature Study, 1940-53), Box 82, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB. Also see Appendix C in the first volume of this study.
- ²⁸ SMR, June 1928, 4-5; Sylvia Mendoza, *The Book of Latina Women: 150 Vidas of Passion, Strength, and Success* (Avon, Mass., Adams Media, 2004), 85-86; A.E. Haley-Oliphant, "Ynez Mexia, Botanist, 1870-1938," in M.L. Matyas and A.E. Haley-Oliphant, editors, *Women Life Scientists: Past, Present, and Future: Connecting*

Role Models to the Classroom Curriculum (Bethesda, Md., American Physiological Society, 1997), 203-16; J.D. Coffman to Supt. MOMC, January 16, 1939, in File 701 (Flora), Box 82, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB.

²⁹ SMR, July 1932, 3; June 1933, 3; September 1933, 5; Harry J. Liek to Herbert L. Mason, September 19, 1933, and A.E. Demaray to Lorin T. Oldroyd, June 2, 1939; both in File 701, see above; Carl Roland, *The Vascular Plant Floristics of Denali National Park and Preserve: A Summary, Including the Results of Plant Inventory Fieldwork 1998-2001*, NPS Central Alaska Network Inventory and Monitoring Program, Final Technical Report CAKN-04-01 (Denali Park, AK, NPS, March 2004), Chapter 3.

³⁰ SMR, June 1939, 3; July 1939, 4; August 1939, 3; September 1939, 4; April 1940, 4; Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 160. In 1942, Dr. Nelson completed a 65-page *Report on the Study of the Plants on Mount McKinley National Park with a List of the Plants Collected in 1939*; see Technical Information Center report number 184/D-230.

³¹ SMR, November 1925, 8; May 1926, 3; October 1933, 4; Bill Myers, "White Trails," *American Forests* 35 (August 1929), 478, 541.

³² SMR, June 1928, 4; September 1929, 3; July 1940, 4.

³³ In 1923, a prospector named Zimmerman told Supt. Karstens that "he would kill any bear he met with in the Park or elsewhere and that the other prospectors would do the same, claiming that bears destroyed their caches." SMR, September 1923, 5; Dixon to Director NPS, October 28, 1932, in File 715-02 (Bears), MOMC, Entry 6, RG 79, NARA CP.

³⁴ SMR, August 1928, 3; September 1932, 2; March 1933, 1; Dixon to Director NPS, October 28, 1932, see above.

³⁵ SMR, July 1934, 6; September 1937, 6.

³⁶ SMR, October 1938, 4; June 1940, 5; July 1940, 4; June 1942, 3; June 1944, 2. Supt. Been, in his July 1940 report, was unsurprised at the wolf and bear activity at the ARC camp but regarding Camp Eielson, he surmised that the bears "must be attracted by food odors as garbage is carefully disposed of."

³⁷ SMR, September 1928, 4; February 1930, 2; October 1931, 4; October 1933, 4; November 1934, 5; February 1938, 5; December 1939, 4; December 1940, 4.

³⁸ SMR, August 1925, 9; February 1929, 4; November 1929, 3; December 1932, 3. In December 1942 (p. 2), the superintendent noted that "feeding trays for the chick-a-dees" were located adjacent to each headquarters residence, but whether they also existed in earlier years is not known.

³⁹ SMR, February 1924, 5-7; March 1924, 2-3.

⁴⁰ SMR, April 1927, 3; June 1928, 4.

⁴¹ SMR, April 1929, 3; May 1929, 3; June 1929, 4; July 1929, 3; *Seward Daily Gateway*, May 8, 1929, 6.

⁴² Supt. Liek, assisted by Chief Ranger Lou Corbley, placed a salt lick in the Sable Pass area. SMR, June 1936, 2.

⁴³ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 161, 182-83; SMR, May 1940, 5; October 1940, 5; Adolph Murie, "Wildlife of Mount McKinley National Park," *National Geographic Magazine* 104 (August 1953), 252.

⁴⁴ SMR, October 1940, 5; May 1943, 2.

⁴⁵ SMR, June 1928, 4-5; February 1932, 1; August 1932, 3; May 1932, 2; Terrence Cole, *The Cornerstone on College Hill* (Fairbanks, University of Alaska Press, 1994), 97.

⁴⁶ "Secretary Lane's Letter on National Park Management," May 13, 1918, in Lary M. Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: the Critical Documents* (Lanham, Md., Rowman and Littlefield, 1994), 49.

⁴⁷ SMR, October 1922, 6; February 1924, 5; January 1926, 3; February 1926, 1, 5.

⁴⁸ SMR, July 1923, 10; June 1924, 5-6; July 1924, 1-4; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, July 17, 1924, 8; July 31, 1924, 1.

⁴⁹ Steve Buskirk, *A History of Wildfires in Mount McKinley National Park and Adjacent Lands*, December 1976, Item 1189, DENA Resource Management Library (RML); January 1930, 2; December 1930, 2; January 1931, 3; November 1931, 3; March 1933, 2; February 1934, 2.

⁵⁰ Timothy Rawson is the acknowledged expert on this subject. In 1994, his M.A. thesis from the University of Alaska Fairbanks was entitled *Alaska's First Wolf Controversy: Predator and Prey in Mount McKinley National Park, 1930-1953*, and seven years later, an expanded version of this study was published through the University of Alaska Press as *Changing Tracks: Predators and Politics in Mt. McKinley National Park*. This section, and the section that follows, are a synopsis of the controversy; those interested in additional information may wish to consult one or both of Rawson's studies.

⁵¹ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 47-51.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 51, 94, 99-100.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 49-52.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 94-96, 100-01; Territory of Alaska, *Session Laws, Resolutions, and Memorials*, 1931, Chapter 117, p. 232; Calvin J. Lensink, "Predator Control with the Bounty System," in Alaska Fish and Game Commission and Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 1958 *Annual Report*, 94.

- ⁵⁵ "An Act to Protect the Birds and Animals in Yellowstone Park," in Dilsaver, ed., *American's National Park System*, 36-39; "Secretary Lane's Letter," in Dilsaver, ed., *American's National Park System*, 48, 50; Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 58.
- ⁵⁶ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 59-60.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 58-61.
- ⁵⁸ SMR, July 1922, 7; October 1922, 6; March 1926, 6; April 1926, 4; May 1927, 3; George M. Wright and Ben H. Thompson, *Fauna of the National Parks of the United States: Wildlife Management in the National Parks*, Fauna Series No. 2 (Washington, NPS, 1935), 72.
- ⁵⁹ Adolph Murie, "Wolf-Mountain Sheep Relationships in Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska – 1946," in File 719 (Predatory Animals), Box 85, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB; SMR, September 1925, 2, 7; November 1925, 8; December 1925, 4, 6, 7. In December 1925, Karsten killed a wolf at headquarters (just east of the park boundary), and a Sanctuary-based park ranger shot twice at a wolf but missed.
- ⁶⁰ SMR, February 1928, 4; July 1928, 3; March 1929, 2; November 1929, 3.
- ⁶¹ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 52-56; SMR, July 1928, 3; August 1928, 4-5.
- ⁶² See, for example, the following SMR entries: June 1929, 5; July 1929, 4; June 1930, 4; July 1930, 4; August 1930, 4; November 1930, 3; April 1931, 3; June 1931, 3.
- ⁶³ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 84-85; SMR, March 1929, 3; April 1929, 1, 3; July 1929, 3; February 1932, 1, 4; March 1932, 2; April 1932, 3; and Newton B. Drury, *The Wolf Problem in Mount McKinley National Park*, January 4, 1946, in File 719 (Predatory Animals), Box 85, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB, notes that the two destructive winters were 1928-29 and 1931-32. But other sources—such as Charles A. Trundy to Alaska Game Commission, January 12, 1931, in File 719, Entry 7, RG 79, NARA CP; Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 97; SMR, April 1931, 3; and SMR, November 1932, 3—suggest that the winters of 1929-30 and 1930-31 may have also been costly to park animals.
- ⁶⁴ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 61, 69-70; Albright, "The National Park Service's Policy on Predatory Animals," *Journal of Mammalogy* 12 (May 1931), 185-86, reprinted in Dilsaver, *American's National Park System*, 87-88.
- ⁶⁵ Albright, "Our National Parks as Wild Life Sanctuaries," *American Forests* 35 (August 1929), 536; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 98.
- ⁶⁶ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 70-71.
- ⁶⁷ SMR, May 1932, 2; August 1932, 3; Dixon, "Meeting the Wild Life of Denali," *American Forests* 38 (December 1932), 644-45, 672.
- ⁶⁸ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 67, 69, 150; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 94-99, 114-17; Joseph Dixon, *Fauna of the National Parks of the United States: Birds and Mammals of Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska*, Fauna Series No. 3 (Washington, GPO), 1938.
- ⁶⁹ SMR, June 1932, 3; July 1932, 3; Wright and Thompson, *Fauna of the National Parks*, Fauna Series No. 2, 71.
- ⁷⁰ SMR, March 1930, 2; December 1931, 3.
- ⁷¹ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 85, 118, 128, 196; March 1933, 3; September 1933, 4; June 1936, 5; September 1938, 4; October 1939, 4.
- ⁷² Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 66-67, 71-72; SMR, September 1932, 4; May 1933, 2, 4; July 1933, 3; May 1934, 4; June 1934, 5.
- ⁷³ SMR, March 1935, addendum; Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 45, 72. Cammerer, in his memo, also stated that "The control of coyotes is in force. Coyotes are an exotic specie and it is the desire of the Service to exterminate them if possible."
- ⁷⁴ House Joint Memorial No. 10, April 27, 1933, in Territory of Alaska, *Session Laws, Resolutions, and Memorials*, 1933, 307-08; *Alaska Sportsman* 1 (January 1935), 17; Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 123, 126-29.
- ⁷⁵ SMR, April 1935, 2, 5; December 1935, 4; February 1936, 2; July 1936, 5-6; Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 118, 128.
- ⁷⁶ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 131; SMR, September 1936, 5-6.
- ⁷⁷ SMR, April 1937, 3; June 1937, 2; July 1937, 5; April 1938, 4; June 1938, 5; July 1938, 5; August 1938, 5; September 1938, 4; October 1938, 4; Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 150.
- ⁷⁸ Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 120-23; Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 148-51.
- ⁷⁹ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 151-52; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 122; SMR, April 1939, 2.
- ⁸⁰ SMR, May 1939, 2; June 1939, 4; Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 153-54.
- ⁸¹ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 152-55; SMR, September 1939, 5; October 1939, 2; November 1939, 5.
- ⁸² Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 157; SMR, February 1940, 2; April 1940, 1, 4; May 1940, 2, 5.
- ⁸³ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 157-64; SMR, July 1940, 1; September 1940, 4; October 1940, 4, 5; May 1941, 3; July 1941, 4.
- ⁸⁴ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 161-62, 164, 182-84; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 122-23; Murie, *The Wolves of Mount McKinley*, Fauna Series No. 5 (Washington, GPO, 1944), 84-87, 95-128, 138-43.

- ⁸⁵ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 156, 159, 162-64; SMR, February 1940, 2; October 1940, 3; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, November 7, 1938, 1, 5.
- ⁸⁶ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 163, 173, 182-83; SMR, June 1941, 4; August 1942, 3; May 1944, 2.
- ⁸⁷ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 180; SMR, February 1945, 1; March 1945, 1; Senate Joint Memorial No. 5, March 15, 1945, in *Territory of Alaska, Session Laws, Resolutions, and Memorials*, 1945, 193-94.
- ⁸⁸ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 180, 185-88; SMR, August 1945, 2; September 1945, 2.
- ⁸⁹ Franklin, *Adolph Murie*, 45, 48; Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 195-99; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 159; SMR, August 1945, 2; NPS, "Advance Release," January 21, 1946, in DENA Box 1, HFC; "Reduce Wolf Population," *Nature Magazine* 39 (April 1946), 220. Murie's conclusions may have been politically expedient, and they also may have been a reflection of Pearson's observations taken several months earlier. See Pearson to RD/R4, April 11, 1945, in File 719, Box 82, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB.
- ⁹⁰ H.R. 5004, in *Congressional Record* 91 (December 14, 1945), 12101; H.R. 5401, in *Congressional Record* 92 (February 6, 1946), 1030; and S. 1999, in *Congressional Record* 92 (March 29, 1946), 2783; Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 202.
- ⁹¹ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 201-06.
- ⁹² *Ibid.*, 207; SMR, December 1945, 1; February 1946, 1, 3; March 1946, 3; April 1946, 4.
- ⁹³ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 207-17; S. 891, in *Congressional Record* 93 (March 14, 1947), 2054; H.R. 2863, in *Congressional Record* 93 (March 31, 1947), 2931.
- ⁹⁴ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 209; SMR, February 1948, 4; March 1948, 1, 3, 4; September 1948, 5; November 1948, 3. Linda Franklin, *Adolph Murie*, p. 50, notes that Murie was in charge of the park's wolf reduction effort. Park ranger William Nancarrow, who worked with Murie during this period, noted that "Ade knocked off a couple of wolves just so they wouldn't send Fish and Wildlife to start killing them. But they were old decrepit wolves." Louise Murie agreed; in a 1991 article, she noted that Adolph "never was pro-predator control, and if he recommended wolf control, it was because of political pressure and also so that he could have control of the effort." Tom Walker, "Crimson Tundra," *Alaska* 57 (May 1991), 27.
- ⁹⁵ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 223-35; SMR, August 1948, 2, 4, 5.
- ⁹⁶ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 236-38; SMR, February 1950, 1.
- ⁹⁷ SMR, March 1950, 2; April 1950, 3; January 1952, 5; March 1952, 2; April 1952, 2; Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 242.
- ⁹⁸ Rawson, *Changing Tracks*, 238, 242-43.
- ⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 243-45. Herb Crisler later filmed considerable wolf footage for Walt Disney Productions, and his wife wrote a chronicle of their experience (*Arctic Wild*, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1958), but their field work took place on the north side of the Brooks Range. Bill Nancarrow, who served as the park naturalist during this period, states (according to an October 31, 2007 Jane Bryant interview) that "as far as he knew, they [the Crislers] never did any work in MOMC and there was no film produced that he was aware of."
- ¹⁰⁰ SMR, August 1927, 1, 3, 4; Frank Norris, "Sport Fishing in Early Alaska," in *Fisheries in Alaska's Past: A Symposium*, Alaska Historical Commission Studies in History No. 227 (Anchorage, 1986), 52.
- ¹⁰¹ NPS, *Circular of General Information Regarding Mount McKinley National Park*, Alaska (Washington, GPO, 1929), 11, 19.
- ¹⁰² John Kauffmann, *Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska; a History of its Establishment and Revision of Its Boundaries* (Washington, NPS, July 1954), 28.
- ¹⁰³ Grant Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 48-49; Morgan Sherwood, "Polly's Denali," *Alaska History* 8 (Fall 1993), 38.
- ¹⁰⁴ SMR, August 1939, 2, 3; September 1939, 4. The Subcommittee on Alaskan Fisheries was part of the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries. The Bureau of Fisheries Study, by James L. Wilding, was entitled *A Partial Survey of Wonder Lake, Mt. McKinley National Park*, 1940; Item 1481 in DENA RML.
- ¹⁰⁵ SMR, July 1940, 2. Regarding the Morino roadhouse, a 1931 visitor noted that "with the completion of the railroad, and the building of Mt. McKinley Park cabins, there was no longer patronage for the roadhouse. But the beds were still made – or unmade – just as they were years ago." Either Maurice Morino or his nephew Joe ran the roadhouse (with an adjacent grocery store and post office) until Maurice died in March 1937. Maud Hosler then operated the grocery store and post office, along with several nearby cabins, for several years thereafter. Jean (Mrs. Lyman) Wear to Supt. DENA, July 18, 1986, in DENA Museum Collection; SMR, July 1939, photo caption.
- ¹⁰⁶ Norris, "Sport Fishing in Early Alaska," 45-46; *Federal Register* 1 (March 28, 1936), 69. The Bureau of Fisheries, at the time, did not consider Dolly Varden trout to be a game fish; the Alaska Legislature, in fact, appropriated funds "for the cleaning of salmon spawning streams and for the destruction of trout and other predatory enemies of the salmon" beginning in 1931. The bounty, which was specifically targeted at Dolly Varden trout, was removed in 1941 when it was discovered that many salmon tails were being passed off as trout. *Territory of Alaska, Session Laws, Resolutions, and Memorials*, 1931, Chapter 117, p. 232; Lensink, "Predator Control with the Bounty System," 91, 94-95.

- ¹⁰⁷ *Federal Register* 5 (June 6, 1940), 2140-41.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Federal Register* 1 (June 27, 1936), 674.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Federal Register* 5 (June 6, 1940), 2140.
- ¹¹⁰ *Federal Register* 6 (May 15, 1941), 2433; SMR, April 1941, 5; Been to Director NPS, April 16, 1941, in File 208-06 (Fishing, Hunting, Trapping), Box 1407, Entry 7, RG 79, NARA CP.
- ¹¹¹ Norris, "Sport Fishing in Early Alaska," 45, 57; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 123-24.
- ¹¹² *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, May 5, 1941, 4; *Federal Register* 6 (May 15, 1941), 2433.
- ¹¹³ This policy, which was "almost certainly" written by NPS biologist David Madsen, was a logical response to language contained in *Fauna No. 1*, which was published in 1933. Arno Cammerer, "Office Order No. 323, Fish Policy," April 13, 1936, in Lary M. Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents*, 149-50; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 124-25.
- ¹¹⁴ SMR, July 1940, 2. Park biologist Tom Meier (November 13, 2007 email) notes that rainbow trout are exotic to Denali.
- ¹¹⁵ SMR, May 1943, 2; June 1943, 2. Pearson's directive was apparently not issued as a federal regulation.
- ¹¹⁶ Public Law 78-106 (July 1, 1943), Sec. 2, as noted in *U.S. Statutes at Large* 57 (Chapter 183), 301-12.
- ¹¹⁷ SMR, July 1943, 2; *Federal Register* 8 (July 16, 1943), pp. 9842 (Sec. 91.5) and 9848 (Appendix A).
- ¹¹⁸ SMR, August 1943, 1; *Federal Register* 8 (August 24, 1943), 11692; Hillory Tolson to Supt. MOMC, July 20, 1943; Pearson to Director NPS, July 26, 1943; "Vetter" to Cahalane and Stevenson, August 21, 1943; all in File 208-06, noted above.
- ¹¹⁹ Public Law 78-106 (see above), Sections 3 and 10.
- ¹²⁰ Pearson to Director NPS, July 13, 1943; Tolson to Supt. MOMC, July 20, 1943; both in File 208-06, see above.
- ¹²¹ *Code of Federal Regulations*, Title 50, Chapter I, Sec. 91.2, in *Federal Register* 8 (July 16, 1943), 9842; *Code of Federal Regulations*, Title 36, Chapter I, Sec. 2.4, in *36 CFR, 1943 Cumulative Supplement*, 9815.
- ¹²² *Code of Federal Regulations*, Title 50, Sec. 91.38, in *Federal Register* 8 (July 16, 1943), 9848.
- ¹²³ *Federal Register* 12 (August 28, 1947), 5779; *Federal Register* 13 (December 29, 1948), 8652.
- ¹²⁴ Been to Director NPS, June 20, 1948, in Box 1404 (MOMC), Entry 7, RG 79, NARA CP; SMR, July 1950, 6; April 1952, 3; May 1952, 3; *Federal Register* 17 (May 22, 1952), 4655.
- ¹²⁵ This regulation, located in Title 36 of the *Code of Federal Regulations*, was originally in Section 20.44. In December 1959, Interior Department officials moved this and other special park regulations to Section 7, and in June 1983, three years after ANILCA, they moved the two Denali-specific regulations remaining from Section 7.44 to Section 13.63. These are presently located in Part 13, Subpart L.
- ¹²⁶ SMR, May 1949, 2; June 1966, 3.
- ¹²⁷ SMR, June 1952, 6; August 1958, 4.
- ¹²⁸ SMR, June 1964, 5; July 1964, 7; February 1965, 4; June 1965, 3; June 1966, 3. An informal study of the dietary intake of the park's Dolly Varden trout had taken place during the spring of 1946, when "an examination of stomach contents indicated their feed at this time of the year is principally what appears to be fresh water shrimp." SMR, April 1946, 3.
- ¹²⁹ SMR, various dates, 1945 through 1950; Franklin, *Adolph Murie*, 51, 122.
- ¹³⁰ Franklin, *Adolph Murie*, 51-56, 122; SMR, October 1950, 4; July 1951, 2. 1950; Hillory Tolson to RD/R4, October 17, 1952, in File 845 ("Research"), Entry 7, RG 79, NARA SB.
- ¹³¹ Franklin, *Adolph Murie*, 80-83.
- ¹³² Acting Director NPS to RD/R4, May 16, 1947; Been to RD/R4, December 13, 1948; both in File 700.01 (Nature Study, 1940-53), Box 82, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB.
- ¹³³ SMR, June 1950, 2; July 1951, 2.
- ¹³⁴ Ade E. Jaskar to Alfred Kuehl, May 6, 1949, in File 600 (Alaska Development Programs, Part III), Box 237, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB; Henry B. Collins, ed., *Science in Alaska: Selected Papers of the [1950] Alaskan Science Conference of the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council* (Washington, Arctic Institute of North America), 1952.
- ¹³⁵ SMR, September 1951, 1-2; September 1952, 1-2, 6; Kirk H. Stone, "Geographical Record," *Geographical Review* 42 (January 1952), 151.
- ¹³⁶ SMR, June 1955, 2; September 1957, 2; September 1958, 3. The annual Alaska Science Conference continued until 1983; after that time, it was called the Arctic Science Conference. It is still being held each fall. Since the 1950s, the only time the conference has met at the park was in September 1999.
- ¹³⁷ Key early USGS reports about the park area included Bulletin 314 (1907), Professional Paper 70 (1911), Bulletin 608 (1915), Bulletin 662-E (1916), Bulletin 687 (1919), Bulletin 755-C (1922), Bulletin 836-D (1930), and Bulletin 849-D (1931). See U.S. Department of the Interior, *List of U.S. Geological Survey Geologic and Water-Supply Reports and Maps for Alaska* (Washington?, the author), December 1986.
- ¹³⁸ Hanna Glacier was James Wickersham's name for Peters Glacier.

- ¹³⁹ SMR, August 1932, 2; September 1934, 2, 5-6; September 1936, 2; August 1937, 3, 6; August 1939, 3; NPS, *Annual Report on Glaciers, MOMC* for 1935 and 1936 (TIC reports D-184/157 and 157-A, respectively).
- ¹⁴⁰ SMR, December 1939, 4; July 1940, 4; September 1941, 3; NPS, "Annual Report on Glaciers" for 1938-1940, TIC reports 184/157B through 184/157D.
- ¹⁴¹ SMR, April 1947, 4; May 1947, 2; A. E. Harrison, "Alaskan Glacier Surges," *Alaska Sportsman* 43 (July 1967), 14.
- ¹⁴² *Anchorage Daily Times*, August 15, 1953, 9; Grant Pearson, "An Alaskan Lake is Born," *Alaska Sportsman* 26 (February 1960), 28-29, 35; Jane Bryant email, October 9, 2007; Steve Carwile interview, December 4, 2007. U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey contract pilot Knute Bergh, for whom the lake is named, had been killed in a nearby airplane crash just a month before the landslide.
- ¹⁴³ NPS, *Mission 66 Prospectus, Mount McKinley National Park*, April 1956, pp. 2-3, 3a, 49-50.
- ¹⁴⁴ USDI press release, April 21, 1956, in NPS/Box 1, Bartlett Collection, UAF; NPS, *Mission 66 Prospectus*, April 1956, 37-38.
- ¹⁴⁵ NPS, *Mission 66 for Mount McKinley National Park*, May 1957, 1, 5, 9, 10.
- ¹⁴⁶ Murie to Supt. MOMC, November 8, 1956, in Folder H14 ("Historical Notes, 1964-70"), Box 7, ARCC-00183 (DENA 00378), AKRO.
- ¹⁴⁷ SMR, January 1957, 3; July 1957, 3; August 1957, 5; September 1958, 3; August 1959, 6; June 1961, 7; April 1962, 3.
- ¹⁴⁸ Franklin, *Adolph Murie*, 90-92; SMR, September 1965, 3.
- ¹⁴⁹ SMR, June 1959, 4-5; October 1959, 3; July 1960, 4; May 1961, 5; September 1961, 4; April 1962, 3; May 1963, 2-3; May 1964, 2; June 1964, 4; Franklin, *Adolph Murie*, 90.
- ¹⁵⁰ SMR, August 1952, 7; January 1953, 2-3; July 1954, 4.
- ¹⁵¹ SMR; June 1957, 6; July 1957, 3-4; August 1957, 4; September 1957, 3; Harrison, "Alaskan Glacier Surges," 14-16, 50.
- ¹⁵² SMR, January 1958, 2; June 1958, 3; September 1960, 4; January 1961, 4.
- ¹⁵³ SMR, August 1959, 5; April 1961, 3; August 1961, 4; September 1961, 5; July 1962, 6. Davis, in all likelihood, was studying Scamman's spring beauty (*Claytonia scammaniana*) which, in North America, grows only in Alaska and the Yukon.
- ¹⁵⁴ SMR, May 1963, 2; June 1964, 4; July 1964, 4-5.
- ¹⁵⁵ SMR, May 1946, photo caption; June 1946, 3; May 1947, 2.
- ¹⁵⁶ SMR, June 1948, 3, 5; August 1948, 4; September 1948, 5; November 1948, 3; June 1949, 3; July 1949, 5. Adolph Murie, in the early 1950s, noted that "the little frame building had an unhappy reputation" because of the bear attacks, perhaps because "huge paw marks, printed in mashed chocolate, still formed patterns on the floor, and perfect noseprints showed on window glass." Murie, "Wildlife of Mount McKinley National Park," 249, 251.
- ¹⁵⁷ SMR, July 1949, 2; September 1951, 2.
- ¹⁵⁸ SMR, July 1949, 2; June 1951, 5.
- ¹⁵⁹ SMR, July 1948, 4; August 1948, 4; September 1948, 5; June 1955, 2; June 1956, 3.
- ¹⁶⁰ SMR, July 1946, 3; September 1948, 5.
- ¹⁶¹ SMR, June 1949, 2; August 1949, 2. Kerry Gunther, with Yellowstone National Park's Bear Management Office, noted in an October 22, 2007 email that Mount McKinley's bear-trap design was not new; mobile culvert traps had been used at Yellowstone since 1945, if not before, and log-built live traps were in use prior to the 1920s.
- ¹⁶² SMR, May 1950, 1; June 1951, 5.
- ¹⁶³ Merriam to Supt. MOMC, September 19, 1951; Murie to Pearson, October 22, 1951; both in File 715.02 (Bears, 1941-53), Box 82, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB.
- ¹⁶⁴ SMR, November 1952, 4; December 1953, 4; July 1955, 5.
- ¹⁶⁵ SMR, July 1952, 2; August 1952, 6; September 1953, 5; July 1954, 4.
- ¹⁶⁶ SMR, June 1930, 3. Also see the following SMRs: June 1931, 3; July 1931, 4; and June 1933, 3.
- ¹⁶⁷ SMR, July 1940, 4; August 1945, 2; June 1950, 1-2; July 1952, 3.
- ¹⁶⁸ SMR, July 1955, 2-3; February 1956, 2; Pearson to RD/R4, February 24, 1956, in File W42 (Special Regulations), Box 26, Accession Number 9NNS 79 87 006, NARA SB.
- ¹⁶⁹ *Federal Register* 21 (June 20, 1956), 4315-16; SMR, October 1959, 3; Warren E. Garst to Conrad Wirth, September 18, 1959, in File A3815 (Public Relations, 1958-60), Box 6, Accession Number 9NNS 79 90 002, NARA SB.
- ¹⁷⁰ *Code of Federal Regulations*, Title 36; 1982, p. 8 (Sec. 2.6) and 1983, p. 125 (Sec. 7.44); *Federal Register* 47 (March 17, 1982), 11612-13; *Federal Register* 48 (June 30, 1983), 30291-92, 30295.
- ¹⁷¹ SMR, June 1957, 6; Frederick C. Dean, interview by Jane Bryant and Frank Norris, April 14, 2005.
- ¹⁷² SMR, June 1958, 3; July 1958, 4; April 1959, 3; May 1959, 2, 4; June 1959, 5; April 1960, 4.
- ¹⁷³ SMR, November 1960, 3; January 1961, 3; February 1961, 4; August 1964, 4.

- ¹⁷⁴ SMR, June 1960, 6; August 1960, 6; September 1960, 4; July 1961, 7; August 1961, 7; September 1961, 2.
- ¹⁷⁵ SMR, October 1963, 3; September 1965, 3.
- ¹⁷⁶ SMR, August 1961, 4; "From Ketchikan to Barrow," *Alaska Sportsman* 27 (October 1961), 28; NPS, *DENA Bear-Human Conflict Management Plan* (Denali Park, the author, June 2003), 123-24.
- ¹⁷⁷ SMR, September 1947, 3; July 1961, 7; June 1962, 7.
- ¹⁷⁸ SMR, June 1951, 2; April 1952, 3; March 1965, 4.
- ¹⁷⁹ SMR, April 1946, 2; February 1949, 3; November 1949, 2; November 1951, 2; January 1952, 3; September 1957, 5.
- ¹⁸⁰ Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 214-15.
- ¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 215, 220.
- ¹⁸² NPS, *Long Range Wildlife Management Plan for Mount McKinley National Park*, March 1, 1965, in File N16, Resource Management Operating Papers, Box 2, Cabinet S-15, DENA Archives.
- ¹⁸³ Franklin, *Adolph Murie*, 87-88, 90-92; SMR, July 1966, 6.
- ¹⁸⁴ In 1967, for example, Prasil invested considerable time in the national natural landmark program, and he also penned a report weighing whether Lake George should be considered as an NPS unit.
- ¹⁸⁵ SMR, September 1965, 1; December 1965, 2; June 1966, 2; March 1967, 1-3; April 1967, 1; Williss, "Do Things Right the First Time," 2005, 14, 17.
- ¹⁸⁶ Franklin, *Adolph Murie*, 91-92; NPS, *Long Range Wildlife Management Plan, Mount McKinley National Park*, January 14, 1970, 3, in File N16, Resource Management Operating Papers, Box 2, Cabinet S-15, DENA Archives.
- ¹⁸⁷ NPS, *DENA Bear-Human Conflict Management Plan*, 124.
- ¹⁸⁸ Richard G. Prasil, *Aerial Wolf Survey: March 1 to 11 and April 20 to 23, 1967* (McKinley Park, Alaska, NPS, 1967), Item 578, DENA RML; Gordon C. Haber, *The Social Structure and Behavior of an Alaskan Wolf Population* (Master's Thesis, Northern Michigan University), 1968, Item 40, DENA RML.
- ¹⁸⁹ See the following reports, all by Richard G. Prasil: *Aerial Wolf Survey, March 3-7 and April 29-May 2, 1968* (McKinley Park, NPS), Item 579, RML; *Summary Report on Stone's Caribou Observations in Mount McKinley National Park, 1967-1968* (NPS, Alaska Natural Resources Survey and Inventory Report), 1968; *Mount McKinley Caribou* (NPS, Alaska Natural Resources Survey and Inventory Report), 1968; *Grizzly Bear Observations, Mount McKinley National Park, 1968*; *Analysis of Wolf Caribou Situation Along the North Boundary of Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska*, unpublished report to Director PNRO, 1971.
- ¹⁹⁰ NPS, *Long Range Wildlife Management Plan, Mount McKinley National Park, 1970*, 1, 3-5.
- ¹⁹¹ Diane Tracy, "Human-Wildlife Interactions Along Mt. McKinley Park Road," in Alaska Cooperative Park Studies Unit (CPSU), *Final Report: Fiscal Year 1975*, pp. T-1 to T-83. A more comprehensive report on Tracy's work is found in her 1977 UAF master's thesis, entitled *Reactions of Wildlife to Human Activity along Mount McKinley National Park Road*.
- ¹⁹² Alaska CPSU, *Final Report [for] Fiscal Year 1975* (pp. 8, 11-20), 1976 (pp. 9-10), 1978 (p. 8), 1979 (pp. 7-8), 1980 (pp. 7-8), and 1981 (pp. 6-7). The problem of bears at the park dump (which since 1964 had been located two miles southeast of the park hotel) was described by Harold R. "Chip" Downing in a 1975 study (see Supt. MOMC to State Director, Alaska, June 2, 1975, in MOMC Box 18, ATF Collection, RG 79, NARA ANC), and the park's response—to close the dump and replace it with a large holding container—is summarized in Chapter 8.
- ¹⁹³ See, for example, the following UAF master's theses: Richard Charles Chapman, *The Effects of Human Disturbance on Wolves (Canis lupus L.)* (1977) and Jim J. Stelmock, *Seasonal Activities and Habitat Use Patterns of Brown Bears in Denali National Park, 1980* (1981).
- ¹⁹⁴ Prasil, Richard G., *Wolf-Caribou Winter Range: Investigator's Annual Report, 1973*; SAR for 1974 (p. 4), 1975 (p. 4), and 1978 (p. 6). The Alaska Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit reported its results in a series of quarterly reports; see, for example, Rodney Boertje, *Range Ecology of the McKinley Caribou Herd; Quarterly Report, July 1979*, Item 480, DENA RML.
- ¹⁹⁵ Steve Buskirk email, October 26, 2004.
- ¹⁹⁶ Van Horn, in 1998, became the park's wilderness program coordinator, part of the Ranger Division.
- ¹⁹⁷ The park's first *Bear-Human Conflict Management Plan*, published in 1984, defined an incident (p. B-2) as "when a bear causes injury, damage or behaves so that people feel threatened, such as if a bear approaches even if only curious." More recently, bear management officials have defined two terms to cover this behavior: "injury" and "incident." Therefore, the current (2003) *Bear-Human Conflict Management Plan* defines an incident (p. 39) more specifically as "any interaction during which a bear makes minimal physical contact with a human that does not result in injury." Over the years, rangers and visitors have had differing perceptions regarding what constitutes a bear incident; this was particularly true during the early-to-mid 1970s, before the park established its Bear Information Management System.

- ¹⁹⁸ John L. Dalle-Molle and Joseph C. Van Horn, "Bear-People Conflict Management in Denali National Park, Alaska," in *Bear-People Conflicts; Proceedings of a Symposium on Management Strategies* (Yellowknife, N.W.T. Department of Renewable Resources, 1987), 122; SARs for 1972 (p. 4), 1973 (p. 5), 1974 (p. 4), 1975 (p. 4), 1976 (p. 3), 1977 (p. 3), 1978 (p. 6), and 1980 (p.3).
- ¹⁹⁹ SAR, 1972, 2; SAR, 1973, 5.
- ²⁰⁰ SAR, 1978, 4, 6; SAR, 1980, 3; Dalle-Molle and Van Horn, "Bear-People Conflict Management," 122; Joe Van Horn interview, October 24, 2007.
- ²⁰¹ Dalle-Molle and Van Horn, "Bear-People Conflict Management," 122; SARs for 1972 (p. 4), 1973 (p. 5), 1974 (p. 4), 1975 (p. 4), 1976 (p. 3), 1977 (p. 3), 1978 (p. 6), and 1980 (p. 3). Articles about hikers injured in the park appeared in the *Anchorage Daily Times*, July 24, 1972, 1, and July 27, 1977, 2 and *Anchorage Daily News*, July 24, 1972, 2; July 28, 1977, 2; June 12, 1980, A-3. The downside of bear feeding is illustrated in James Brickey and Catherine Brickey, "Only Two Gumdrops," *Alaska* 39 (June 1973), 33, 57, and Rick McIntyre, "A Cub Named Stony," *Alaska* 58 (May 1992), 31-33.
- ²⁰² SMR, May 1952, 6; June 1955, 2.
- ²⁰³ SAR for 1973 (pp. 5-6), 1974 (p. 4), 1975 (p. 4), 1976 (p. 3), 1977 (p. 3), 1978 (p. 6), and 1980 (p. 3).
- ²⁰⁴ SAR, 1976, 3; SAR, 1978, 6.
- ²⁰⁵ Proclamation 4616 (December 1, 1978), in *Federal Register* 43 (December 5, 1978), 57035-41.
- ²⁰⁶ Williss, "Do Things Right the First Time," revised edition, 139.
- ²⁰⁷ Public Law 96-487, Sec. 202(3)(a), in *U.S. Statutes at Large* 94 (1980), 2382-83. No mention was made of the Toklat River and its chum run, because this area had not been included in the expanded park unit.
- ²⁰⁸ NPS, *Draft Natural and Cultural Resource Management Plan and Environmental Assessment, DENA*, April 1982, pp. II-4 to II-13, Item 300, DENA RML. In 1986, an abbreviated form of the RMP was finalized; see Item 301, DENA RML.
- ²⁰⁹ NPS, *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Assessment, Land Protection Plan, Wilderness Suitability Review* (Denver, the author, March 1985), 28.
- ²¹⁰ NPS, *General Management Plan, Land Protection Plan, Wilderness Suitability Review* (Denver, the author, November 1986), 49-57.
- ²¹¹ NPS, *Draft General Management Plan* (March 1985), 10, 13, 15, 185; NPS, *General Management Plan* (November 1986), 12-17, 229; Francis J. Singer and Joan B. Beattie, *Wildlife Viewing and the Mandatory Public Transportation System in Denali National Park*, Research and Resources Management Report AR-4 (draft), pp. 2-3, Item 1594, DENA RML. Dated March 1, 1984, it was listed as "in preparation" in both the draft and final GMPs.
- ²¹² Dalle-Molle and Van Horn, "Bear-People Conflict Management," 122-23.
- ²¹³ *Ibid.*, 123-26; SAR, 1987, 2; NPS, *General Management Plan* (November 1986), 53, 55; *Anchorage Daily News*, March 22, 1986, B-1, B-3.
- ²¹⁴ NPS, *General Management Plan* (November 1986), 49.
- ²¹⁵ Wayne E. Heimer and Arthur C. Smith, *Ram Horn Growth and Population Quality: Their Significance to Dall Sheep Management in Alaska*, Project W-17-R, ADF&G Game Division, 1975, Item #1266, DENA RML; Bob Mauck, "When the Living is Easy," *National Wildlife* 24 (August-September 1986), 10-17.
- ²¹⁶ SAR, 1987, 2; Sherry Simpson, "Seeing Moose," *Alaska* 62 (October 1996), 24.
- ²¹⁷ Van Ballenberghe's moose studies in southcentral Alaska began in 1977. See *Anchorage Daily News*, August 1, 2004, D-1.
- ²¹⁸ SAR for 1984 (p. 2), 1986 (p. 2), 1987 (p. 2), 1989 (p. 2), and 1991 (p. 10); Susan L. Boudreau, *Long-Term Ecological Monitoring Program, Synthesis and Evolution of the Prototype for Monitoring Subarctic Parks: 1991 to 2002 Perspective* (Anchorage?, NPS, 2003), 135.
- ²¹⁹ SAR, 1986, 1-2; L. David Mech, "Stubborn Hunter in a Harsh Land," *National Wildlife* 27 (August-September 1989), 20-24; Mech, et al., *The Wolves of Denali* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press), 1998.
- ²²⁰ SAR, 1991, 10; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 21, 1995, B-1 and September 15, 1996, M-1.
- ²²¹ Park records and scientific contributions suggest that Mech, assisted by Layne Adams, continued his work until 1993, when Adams became the principal investigator, and Keay continued until 2001. Since that time, Adams has continued his research on both caribou and wolf populations. Adams, an Alaska Regional Office (NPS) employee, and Keay, a park employee, were transferred to a new DOI agency, the National Biological Survey, and in late 1996 this agency became the Biological Resources Division within the U.S. Geological Survey.
- ²²² SAR for 1986 (p. 2), 1988 (p. 2), 1995 (p. 5), 1996 (p. 10), and 2002 (p. 4).
- ²²³ SAR for 1984 (p. 2), 1987 (p. 2), and 1988 (p. 2); Boudreau, *Long-Term Ecological Monitoring*, 156.
- ²²⁴ SAR for 1995 (p. 6), 1996 (p. 10), and 2002 (p. 5); Boudreau, *Long-Term Ecological Monitoring*, 172.
- ²²⁵ SMR, December 1966, 2; *Anchorage Daily News*, December 6, 1988, G-3; Carol McIntyre email, October 30, 2007.

- ²⁷⁶ SAR for 1996 (p. 10), 2002 (p. 4), and 2003 (p. 25); Boudreau, *Long-Term Ecological Monitoring*, 143-54.
- ²⁷⁷ SAR, 1978, 6; Alaska CPSU, *Final Report*, 1979, 7; SAR, 1987, 3; SAR, 1988, 2.
- ²⁷⁸ SAR for 1991 (p. 11) and 1998 (p. 3); Boudreau, *Long-Term Ecological Monitoring*, 99-108.
- ²⁷⁹ SAR, 1991, 9-10; Boudreau, *Long Term Ecological Monitoring Program*, 9-10.
- ²⁸⁰ Boudreau, *Long Term Ecological Monitoring Program*, 32-202, *passim*.; NPS, *Long-Term Ecological Monitoring Program, Annual Administrative Report*, Fiscal Year 1997, 1, 3-4, 12-13.
- ²⁸¹ Boudreau, *Long Term Ecological Monitoring Program*, 12, 20-21.
- ²⁸² *Ibid.*, 20-27; Maggie MacCluskie and Karen Oakley, *Central Alaska Network Vital Signs Monitoring Plan* (Fort Collins, Colo., NPS Office of Inventory, Monitoring, and Evaluation, September 2005), 164-67.
- ²⁸³ SAR for 1980 (p. 4), 1987 (p. 2), 1998 (p. 3), 2002 (p. 2), and 2003 (p. 29); NPS, *Long-Term Ecological Monitoring Program, Annual Administrative Report*, Fiscal Year 1997, 3.
- ²⁸⁴ For structural fires, see SMR, March 1931, 3; May 1934, 5; January 1938, 4; October 1939, 1, 5; November 1950, 2-3. For locomotive fires, see SMR, June 1941, 5; May 1942, 2; June 1944, 2; June 1950, 4; February 1951, 2.
- ²⁸⁵ Buskirk, *A History of Wildfires in Mount McKinley National Park and Adjacent Lands*, December 1976. The potential for fire in the park changed dramatically in December 1978; whereas fire was a minor factor in "old park" management, much of the acreage added to the park—particularly those areas north and west of the "old park" boundaries—had a high fire potential.
- ²⁸⁶ Hal K. Rothman, *A Test of Adversity and Strength; Wildland Fire in the National Park System* (n.p., NPS, 2005), 152, 174-76; SAR for 1980 (p. 4) and 1982 (p. 3); Dan Warthin interview, October 24, 2007; *Anchorage Daily Times*, July 7, 1982, A-3; *Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan, Tanana/Minchumina Planning Area* (March 1982), 55-65, Appendix E.
- ²⁸⁷ Rothman, *A Test of Adversity and Strength*, 177-79; Dan Warthin email, October 25, 2007. NPS officials, while insisting on the right to prescribe fires, have never employed the technique at Denali, primarily because fires in the park have not historically been subject to major suppression efforts.
- ²⁸⁸ Joe Van Horn interview, October 24, 2007.
- ²⁸⁹ Rothman, *A Test of Adversity and Strength*, 164-65; Joe Van Horn interview, October 24, 2007; SAR for 1983 (p. 2), 1991(p. 11), and 2003 (p. 23).
- ²⁹⁰ Dan Warthin email, October 25, 2007; *Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan*, October 1998; NPS, *Fire Management Plan*, DENA, October 29, 2004. Both documents are located in the Alaska Fire Management Officer's files, AKRO.
- ²⁹¹ Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 81, 98, 110.
- ²⁹² Frank T. Been to RD/R4, November 8, 1948; L.F. Cook to RD/R4, November 22, 1948; Grant Pearson to RD/R4, June 9, 1950; all in File 701 (Flora), Box 82, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB; Carl Roland email, October 31, 2007.
- ²⁹³ Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 258, 353.
- ²⁹⁴ "Wanted: Denali Dandelion Hunters!" *Alaska Magazine* 64 (December 1998/January 1999), 14; "Update," *Alaska Magazine* 64 (March 1999), 17; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 14, 2006, G-1.
- ²⁹⁵ SAR for 2002 (p. 1), 2003 (p. 22), and 2004 (p.17); *Anchorage Daily News*, August 11, 2002, G-1; AK2Day (AKRO electronic newsletter), July 23-24, 2003; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 14, 2006, G-1.
- ²⁹⁶ Jane Lakeman email, October 25, 2007; Phil Brease review comments, November 20, 2007 regarding the park's paleontological resources.
- ²⁹⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, July 6, 2005, B-1, B-4; May 24, 2006, G-1, G-10; AK2Day, May 19, 2006. SAR, 2002, p. 3, states that there were 276 "paleontological localities" in the park unit in fiscal year 2000.
- ²⁹⁸ Jane Lakeman email, October 25, 2007.
- ²⁹⁹ SAR, 1989, 2; SAR, 2003, 24; Pat Owen email, December 7, 2007. Dale L. Taylor, Kenneth D. Vogt, and Janet Warburton, *A System for Monitoring Impact of Denali National Park Road Traffic on Wildlife*, 1997, Item 897, DENA RML.
- ³⁰⁰ Karen Fortier, Chuck Tomkiewicz, and Gordon Olson, *Park Road Use/Wildlife Interaction Monitoring, A Pilot Effort*, 1995 (1996), Item 840, DENA RML; Judy A. Putera and Jeffrey A. Keay, *Effect of Vehicle Traffic on Dall Sheep Migration in Denali National Park*, annual reports for 1995 (Item 837), 1996 (Item 655), and 1997 (Item 1196), DENA RML.
- ³⁰¹ SAR, 2005, 14; SAR, 2006, 1, 3, 17; Laura Phillips, *An Integrated Study of Park Road Capacity* [online brochure], Summer 2007, at <http://www.nps.gov/dena/naturescience/upload/Roadcapacity07Su.pdf>.
- ³⁰² *New York Sun*, January 24, 1897, 6; Robert Muldrow, "Mount McKinley," *National Geographic Magazine* 12 (August 1901), 312-13.
- ³⁰³ Alfred H. Brooks, *The Mount McKinley Region, Alaska*, USGS Professional Paper 70 (Washington, GPO, 1911), 32-33.
- ³⁰⁴ Michael Sfraga, *Bradford Washburn, A Life of Exploration* (Corvallis, Oregon State Univ. Press, 2004), 160-61, 181-83; *New York Times*, August 14, 1956, 2; *Seattle Times*, July 30, 1989, A-8.

- ²⁵⁵ *Anchorage Daily Times*, April 20, 1964, 8; July 16, 1968, 13; Clyde Wahrhaftig, "Quaternary Geology of the Nenana River Valley and Adjacent Parts of the Alaska Range," in *Quaternary and Engineering Geology in the Central Part of the Alaska Range*, U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 293 (Washington, GPO, 1958), 6; *New York Times*, July 16, 1977, A-16.
- ²⁵⁶ *New York Times*, July 16, 1977, A-16; *Anchorage Times*, July 18, 1977, 43; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 21, 1977, 2; *Seattle Times*, July 30, 1989, A-8; Steve Carwile interview, October 24, 2007.
- ²⁵⁷ "Have Slide Rule, Will Climb," *U.S. News and World Report* 106 (June 12, 1989), 14; *Seattle Times*, July 30, 1989, A-8; NPS, *Mountaineering Report*, DENA, 1989, 3; SAR, 1990, 3; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 3, 1991, B-11; Greg Durocher (USGS) interview, November 15, 2007.
- ²⁵⁸ SMR, October 1932, 1; July 1933, 1; July 1935, 2.
- ²⁵⁹ SMR, June 1941, 2; Adolph Murie, "The Wilds Where the Caribou Roam," *Audubon Magazine* 44 (January-February 1942), 3.
- ²⁶⁰ William L. Bowen to Supt. MOMC, January 8, 1969, in "Correspondence, 1952-73" file, DENA Files, WASO History Division; Wayne Merry to Supt. MOMC, January 28, 1969, in "D22, Construction thru ..." File, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.
- ²⁶¹ SMR, October 1941, 3; July 1942, 2; June 1943, 2; February 1948, 4; July 1950, 3.
- ²⁶² SMR, May 1951, 2; March 1952, 1; October 1952, 1; Wirth to Pearson, June 10, 1954, and Herbert E. Kahler to RD/R4, August 26, 1954, both in "Correspondence, 1952-73," DENA Files, WASO History Division.
- ²⁶³ SMR, March 1951, 5; June 1951, 3, 5; July 1951, 3. The plaque read "In memory of Charles Sheldon, 1967-1928, Conservationist-Author-Explorer".
- ²⁶⁴ SMR, January 1934, 2; July 1952, 2. As Horace Albright noted in *The Birth of the National Park Service, the Founding Years* (p. 249), similar plaques—sponsored by the ad hoc The Stephen T. Mather Appreciation—were installed in the years following Mather's January 1930 death in various "parks and monuments especially dear to the late Director." See U.S. Interior Department, *Annual Report for 1932* (pp. 106-07) and 1933 (p. 158).
- ²⁶⁵ SMR, September 1923, 3; September 1925, 6; July 1958, 3. In the early 1990s, park staff removed the Sheldon and Karstens plaques from the rock wall, placed them on pedestals, and installed them on the west side of the Toklat River bridge.
- ²⁶⁶ Ivan Skarland to John Hussey, March 23, 1959, in "Correspondence 1952-73" DENA file, WASO History Division; SMR, June 1959, 2.
- ²⁶⁷ Kristen Griffin, *An Overview and Assessment of Archeological Resources, DENA, Alaska*, NPS Research/ Resources Management Report AR-16 (Anchorage, NPS, September 1990), 62-63; SMR, September 1960, 2, 3; January 1961, 3; May 1961, 5; June 1961, 7; July 1961, 6; August 1961, 6-7; SAR, 1965, 2; Frederick H. West, "Teklanika West," in West, ed., *American Beginnings: The Prehistory and Palaeoecology of Beringia* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996), 332-43.
- ²⁶⁸ SMR, June 1963, 3; SAR, 1965, 2; Griffin, *Overview and Assessment*, 63; H. Morris Morgan, *An Archeological Survey of Mount McKinley National Park*, May 1965, 10, in AKRO-RCR files; *Anchorage Daily Times*, November 27, 1963, 14.
- ²⁶⁹ SMR, June 1964, 3, 7; Griffin, *Overview and Assessment*, 63-65; Warren F. Hamilton to William R. Wood, December 17, 1964, in "Correspondence 1952-73" DENA file, WASO History Division.
- ²⁷⁰ SMR, October 1966, 2; Roy Appleman to Chief Historian, February 28, 1968, in "Correspondence 1952-73," DENA files, WASO History Division; NPS, *Historic Structures Report, Part I, Toklat Patrol Cabin Complex, Building Number 4 and Supporting Structures* (San Francisco, Western Service Center, June 1970), 5, 17; SAR for 1973 (p. 6), and 1975 (p. 6).
- ²⁷¹ SAR, 1976, p. 5. A historic furnishings report for the cabin was completed in 1995.
- ²⁷² Griffin, *Overview and Assessment*, 65; NPS, *National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, Theme XXI, Political and Military Affairs, 1865-1910, Special Study, Alaska History, 1741-1910* (1961), a-b, 222; NPS, *National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, Theme XVI, Indigenous Peoples and Cultures, Special Study, Alaska Aboriginal Culture* (1962), d-e, 171; NPS, et al., *National Register of Historic Places, 1966 to 1994* (Washington, Preservation Press, 1994), 21.
- ²⁷³ Griffin, *Overview and Assessment*, 65-66; NPS, *Draft Natural and Cultural Resource Management Plan and Environmental Assessment, DENA*, April 1982, projects C-1 and C-2. Ernest J. Borgman, of the Alaska Field Office, first broached the idea of an administrative history in November 1969. No funding for such a project was provided in either 1969 or 1982. In the late 1990s, however, two years of funding was provided to a contractor, the results of which preceded the present effort.
- ²⁷⁴ SAR, 1986, 3; SAR, 1987, 3; NPS, *National Register of Historic Places*, 21; NPS, *Division of Cultural Resources, 1981-1986, Alaska Regional Office* (Anchorage, NPS, 1987), 81; David E. Snow, *Design Guidelines, Mt. McKinley Park Headquarters Historic District* (Anchorage?, NPS), June 1, 1985. The Savage River patrol cabin, which was built in 1924, moved in 1940, and "improved" during World War II (see Chapter 5), was declared ineligible for the National Register because it "no longer appears to be able to reflect its historic

associations with the history of early patrol cabins" in the park. This cabin was restored in 1987; it was initially used as an employee residence, but beginning in 1995 it was used for interpretive programs (see Chapter 11). Bill Bushong review comments, November 25, 1986, in "Correspondence 1975-on" DENA file, WASO History Division; SAR, 1987, 3; SAR, 1995, 5; Marisa James email, October 31, 2007.

²⁷⁵ Dave Snow, et al., *Historic Structure Report, Mt. McKinley Park Headquarters Historic District and Wonder Lake* (Anchorage?, NPS), January 1, 1987; SAR, 1987, 6; William E. Brown, *A History of the Denali-Mount McKinley Region, Alaska* (Santa Fe, NPS), 1991; Brown, *Denali, Symbol of the Alaskan Wild* (Denali National Park, ANHA), 1993; NPS, *Division of Cultural Resources*, 81.

²⁷⁶ Griffin, *Overview and Assessment*, 66-67.

²⁷⁷ Steve Peterson interview, October 26, 2007; SAR for 1993 (p. 7), 2002 (p. 2), and 2003 (pp. 15, 17).

²⁷⁸ Mary Tidlow interview, October 30, 2007.

²⁷⁹ NPS, "Backcountry Patrol Report" (Case Incident Number 920008), June 25, 1992; Faulkner to Supt. DENA, December 23, 1992; Ted Birkedal to Supt. DENA, March 16, 1993 (Survey 016-92-DENA), and Gary Somers to Supt. DENA, October 20, 1993 (Survey 005-93-DENA); all in XXX File ARO-92-114, in NPS *Archeological Compliance/Inventory, DENA Book 2, 1991-1995*, AKRO-RCR Collection; "1993 Sierra Club Outings, Alaska and Arctic Canada," *Sierra* 78 (January-February 1993), 73.

²⁸⁰ Amy Craver, email to Clarence Summers, November 14, 2007. The initial (May 1984) SRC members were Florence Collins, Ray Collins, Lynn Castle (McKinley Park), Percy Duyck (Nenana), Ruby John (Cantwell), Nick Dennis (Nikolai), Roberta Sheldon (Talkeetna), and Ken Charlie (Minto).

²⁸¹ Richard H. Bishop, *Subsistence Resource Use in the Proposed North Addition to Mt. McKinley National Park*, Occasional Paper No. 17 (Fairbanks, Anthropology and Historic Preservation, Cooperative Park Studies Unit, December 1978), 106-07. The nearly-identical December 1977 version is located in the AKRO-RCR files.

²⁸² Dianne Gudgel-Holmes, *Ethnohistory of Four Interior Alaskan Waterbodies* (Anchorage, Alaska Department of Natural Resources), August 1979; William Schneider, Dianne Gudgel-Holmes, and John Dalle-Molle, *Land Use in the North Addition of Denali National Park and Preserve: An Historical Perspective*, NPS Alaska Region, Research/Resources Management Report AR-9 (Anchorage, NPS), 1984. The 1979 study also investigated the Nowitna drainage, northwest of the park unit.

²⁸³ Norris, *Alaska Subsistence*, 144-45, 209-11.

²⁸⁴ Dianne Gudgel-Holmes, *Kantishna Oral History Project: Phrase II, Part I, Interviews with Native Elders*, draft (Anchorage, NPS), September 1988; Dianne Gudgel-Holmes, *Native Place Names of the Kantishna Drainage, Alaska, Kantishna Oral History Project* (Anchorage, NPS), 1991.

²⁸⁵ Darryll R. Johnson, Dianne Gudgel-Holmes, and James Levy, *Traditional Use of Cabins and Other Shelters in the North Additions to Denali National Park and Preserve: Ethno-Historical Context and Background, Ownership and Transfer Norms, and the Choice of Cabins or Tents as Winter Trapline Shelters* (Seattle, University of Washington), 1999; James Kari, *Native Place Names Mapping in Denali National Park and Preserve*, December 1999.

²⁸⁶ Raymond L. Collins, *Dichinane' Hwt'ana: A History of the People of the Upper Kuskokwim Who Live in Nikolai and Telida* (McGrath, the author), September 2000, revised January 2004; Brenda Rebne, *Cantwell Native Village History* (Cantwell, the author), December 2000; Minchumina Community School, *Lake Minchumina: Past and Present*, 2000; Tanana Tribal Council, *A Short History of the Native Village of Tanana*, 2000; Terry Haynes, David B. Andersen, and William E. Simeone, *Denali National Park and Preserve: Ethnographic Overview and Assessment* (Fairbanks, ADF&G Division of Subsistence), February 2001.

²⁸⁷ Norris, *Alaska Subsistence*, 184, 233, 278.



Chapter Thirteen: A Century of Mountaineering

Early History of Alaska Range Climbs

As noted in Chapter 1, local residents were familiar with Mount McKinley—its beauty, its predominance, and its majesty—for thousands of years before non-Native visitors began to filter into the area. Non-Native visitors, in turn, spent 150 years gazing at the mountain from afar before they ever made a closer inspection. The mountain did not acquire its present, geographically-accepted name until 1897, and for the next twenty years almost everyone who visited the immediate vicinity of the massif did so in search of exploration or climbing, not for its wildlife.

In 1902, the Alfred H. Brooks expedition made an eastbound traverse across the high valleys north of the Alaska Range and made a brief, on-the-spot, and ultimately unsuccessful attempt to climb Mount McKinley. But the first serious attempt to climb the mountain began the following May, when a four-man party headed by James A. Wickersham left Fairbanks and headed down the Chena River on the steamer *Tanana Chief* (see Chapter 2). They ascended the Kantishna River, then hiked south to Peters Glacier and Jeffrey Glacier (both of which were just south of Jeffrey Dome) before they were turned back at what would later be named the “Wickersham Wall,” a 10,000-foot-high, near-vertical mass near Peters Dome. A few weeks later, an 18-man party led by Dr. Frederick Cook approached the mountain. Cook, like Wickersham, attempted to climb McKinley via Peters Glacier but was unable to ascend beyond the glacier.¹

Although Charles Sheldon’s two trips to the countryside north of the Alaska Range—an initial 1906 foray, with another in 1907-08—were key to the area’s eventual inclusion in a national park, most of those who ventured to this area were climbers who hoped to summit the highest point in North America. In 1906, Frederick Cook returned to the area as part of a four-man party; after an initial unsuccessful attempt, he tried again with just one companion, Robert Barrill. Upon returning home, Cook told others that he had surmounted the peak, though others were dubious of his achievement. Four years later, two of Cook’s previous climbing companions returned to the mountain and debunked Cook’s claim.

That same year, four Fairbanks “sourdoughs,” all of whom had been Kantishna-area miners, made a new attempt on the mountain. Together, they hauled a 14-foot-long spruce pole up the slopes of Mount McKinley, and two in their party—Billy Taylor and Pete Anderson—planted the pole near the summit of 19,470-foot North Peak, where it could be plainly seen from Fairbanks. In 1912, a new assault on the mountain began when Belmore Browne and two others ascended to within 200 yards of Mount McKinley’s South Peak (elevation 20,320) before twice being driven back by a snow-driven gale.

Hoping for better luck, a four-man party headed by Archdeacon Hudson Stuck (the group’s organizer) and Harry Karstens (the climb leader)

All of the early attempts to climb Mt. McKinley involved a long and difficult approach to reach the geographically remote mountain before the actual climbing commenced. This photograph shows the 1912 Belmore Browne expedition on their dog team approach from Seward to and across the Alaska Range to reach the north side of Mt. McKinley, where their climb began. Merl La Voy Photo, from Belmore Browne, *The Conquest of Mt. McKinley*



Archdeacon Henry Stuck, left, is pictured here at their Clearwater Creek camp with Harry Karstens, his carefully selected colleague for the climb of Mt. McKinley in 1913. This party approached the great mountain from the north, transporting supplies as close to the mountain as possible by navigable rivers during open water, and then travelling overland by dog team. Hudson Stuck, *The Ascent of Denali*

Figure 3. Mount McKinley (South Peak) Climbing Statistics, 1913 to Present

Year	# of attempts	# of summits	% successful	# of deaths	Year	# of attempts	# of summits	% successful	# of deaths
1913	4	4	100	0	1975	362	131	36	0
					1976	508	339	67	4
1932	9	4	44	2	1977	360	284	79	0
					1978	459	270	59	0
1942	8	7	88	0	1979	533	351	66	2
					1980	659	283	43	8
1947	14	10	71	0	1981	612	321	52	6
1948	3	3	100	0	1982	696	310	45	0
					1983	709	474	67	2
1951	8	8	100	0	1984	695	324	47	2
1952	29	10	34	0	1985	645	321	50	2
1953	9	3	33	0	1986	755	406	54	4
1954	13	13	100	1	1987	817	251	31	2
1955	4	0	0	0	1988	916	551	60	2
1956	18	0	0	0	1989	1,009	517	51	6
1957	8	0	0	0	1990	998	573	57	3
1958	12	10	83	0	1991	935	557	60	0
1959	8	4	50	0	1992	1,070	515	48	11
1960	24	23	96	0	1993	1,108	670	60	1
1961	31	20	65	0	1994	1,277	702	55	3
1962	40	25	63	0	1995	1,220	523	43	6
1963	50	29	58	0	1996	1,148	489	43	2
1964	37	25	68	0	1997	1,110	561	51	1
1965	31	3	10	0	1998	1,166	420	36	3
1966	22	7	32	0	1999	1,183	508	43	0
1967	83	63	76	8	2000	1,209	630	52	0
1968	40	30	75	0	2001	1,305	772	59	0
1969	71	49	69	1	2002	1,232	645	52	1
1970	124	72	58	2	2003	1,179	688	58	0
1971	163	48	29	2	2004	1,275	656	51	1
1972	181	80	44	3	2005	1,340	775	58	2
1973	203	108	53	0	2006	1,152	581	50	1
1974	282	139	49	2	2007	1,218	573	47	2

Source: NPS, "Mount McKinley South Peak (20,320 feet) Attempts and Summits," and NPS, "Climbing Deaths on Denali," both in Talkeetna Ranger Station files, courtesy Roger Robinson and Daryl Miller.

left Fairbanks in mid-March 1913. Together with two younger compatriots, Walter Harper and Robert Tatum, Stuck and Karstens headed up the Kantishna and Bearpaw rivers, then struck out over the snow on routes that two previous climbing parties had assayed. After arriving at McGonagall Pass, the group ascended the Muldrow Glacier, again following in the footsteps of earlier climbers. Despite additional difficulties brought on by the effects of a June 1912 earthquake, the four men inched up Harper Glacier to Karstens Ridge.³ Shortly after noon on June 7, 1913, Harper—followed

soon afterward by Karstens, Tatum, and an exhausted Stuck—reached the top of the South Peak of Mount McKinley. After almost three months of work and tedium, victory was theirs. Within two weeks, the party had safely returned to civilization.³ Given their successful expedition, no further attempts were made to climb the mountain for another nineteen years (see Figure 3).

During the year-long period of debate that preceded the establishment of Mount McKinley National Park, both the Interior Department



Bradford Washburn traced the early climbing routes of the upper portion of Mt. McKinley on this aerial photograph of the mountain taken from the northeast. ©Bradford Washburn, courtesy Panopticon Gallery, Boston, MA

and the U.S. Congress made several references to the peak. In a May 1916 Senate hearing, for instance, the Committee on Territories noted that:

Mount McKinley is not only the highest mountain in North America, but is most unique in its conformation. It reaches in altitude 20,300 feet. While this mountain is remarkable by reason of its extraordinary height, it is unique through the fact that it rises almost abruptly from the foothills and plains surrounding its base, which only have an altitude of two or three thousand feet. ... This mountain is covered by perpetual snow for a distance of about 18,000 feet below the summit. It is studded with many large glaciers, and its sides are cut with torrential mountain streams.

In the parlance of a later generation, the area immediately surrounding Mount McKinley

consisted of “rocks and ice,” and preserving this expanse was entirely consistent with the “worthless lands” thesis that was an undercurrent of so many of the early national parks. For this reason, no one in a position of executive or legislative authority expressed any particular opposition to including the mountain massif in a proposed national park. And the fact that the new park would be named for the great peak doubtless helped assure the bill’s success in the legislature. Executive and legislative officials, therefore, concentrated their debates and discussions on game conditions, budgetary matters, and other aspects of the proposed Mount McKinley National Park. And according to Congress, nothing about the mountain itself was noted among any of the principal reasons delineated for the park’s establishment.⁴

Climbing Expeditions in 1932

As noted in Chapter 3, the first park superintendent – indeed, the only park employee for more than six months – was Harry Karstens, a Klondike gold rush veteran who led the first party up

Alfred Lindley, Erling Strom, Harry Liek and Grant Pearson (left to right) made up the 1932 McKinley expedition that was the first to reach the summit of both the south and north peaks. This group utilized dog teams to transport their supplies up to the 11,000 foot level of the Muldrow Glacier. Strom, a ski enthusiast, and his teammates pioneered the use of skis on the climb. DENA 3848, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



Mount McKinley. The fact that he had climbed the pre-eminent feature in the park gave him considerable credibility to Alaska residents, and the story he gave of his 1913 exploit provided such great entertainment to Outside tourists that he recounted the details of his climb numerous times to park visitors.⁵

In September 1928 Karstens resigned, to be replaced soon afterward by Harry J. Liek. The former assistant chief ranger for Yellowstone National Park, Liek had a sinewy, ramrod-straight profile. But during the winter of 1929-30, NPS Director Horace Albright began to criticize him for, among other things, spending too much time on construction work rather than on patrol. By early 1931, Albright further noted that

I hear nothing particularly adverse [about your job performance] just as I find no particular interest in you or enthusiasm for you ... you are doing nothing outstanding and ... you are really spending a good deal of time at headquarters instead of moving about the park studying its problems....

A month later, an angry Liek responded point by point to Albright's numerous criticisms. He did, however, agree that he had made little headway with Alaska public opinion because "Alaska people do not visit the park like the people in the states do." And he further averred that "Right now it would be hard for a person to do anything conspicuous here unless it was to climb Mt. McKinley."⁶

Just a few months later, the wheels were set in motion for Liek to do just that. In the spring of 1931, Erling Strom (a Norwegian outdoorsman) and Alfred Lindley (a Minneapolis attorney) met and discussed the idea of a Mt. McKinley climb. That summer Lindley went to Alaska and visited the park; when Liek heard of their plans, he told them "if the Park Service is in on the climb, you can use park dogs to haul supplies free of charge." Liek, thus accepted, then convinced the two organizers to bring park ranger Grant Pearson along as well. On April 4, 1932, the party headed west from headquarters, and six weeks later it achieved what had never been done before. The foursome climbed both of McKinley's summits: South Peak on May 8 and North Peak a day later. On May 15 they were back, safely, at headquarters.⁷ Theirs was the first party to climb either peak since the 1913 Stuck-Karstens expedition.

Another party attempted to climb Mt. McKinley that same spring, but its primary goal was scientific research, not the thrill of mountain climbing. During this period, many in the scientific community were excited about cosmic ray research. This field of inquiry had been launched in 1911 by Austrian scientist Victor F. Hess, who ascended in a hot-air balloon up to the 17,500-foot level with a gold leaf spectrometer, a device that counted radiation. Hess made his balloon flight because he, and other scientists, knew that there was more radiation in the environment than they could account for by the known sources of natural background activity. Hess, hoping to learn about new sources of radiation, was surprised to find that the higher he climbed, the more he (and the spectrometer)



Three months after the Lindley-Liek group discovered the deaths of Allen Carpé and Theodore Koven, the first two fatalities on Mt. McKinley, a recovery party dug Koven's body out from nearly ten feet of snow and brought it back to Koven's mother. The retrieval party consisted of Merl La Voy, a veteran of the Parker-Browne expeditions of 1910 and 1912, Andy Taylor, George Pitiff, and park ranger Grant Pearson. DENA 3065, Grant Pearson Album, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

were subjected to a new, previously unknown form of “penetrating radiation” that came from an unknown location in outer space. At first, few believed that Hess had discovered anything significant; they felt that this radiation came from well-known, predictable sources. But in a series of subsequent experiments, Werner Kohlhörster confirmed Hess's hypotheses. By 1919, many in the scientific community recognized that these sub-atomic, high-energy particles (what Hess called “cosmic radiation”) represented a new phenomenon, and in 1936 Hess was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics for the research related to his balloon flight and similar efforts during the 1911-13 period.⁸

The excitement surrounding Hess's research, and the questions posed by his conclusions, stimulated others to discover more about these particles, that soon came to be known as cosmic “rays” because Robert Millikan—another Nobel prizewinner in physics—theorized in 1925 that these particles were gamma rays from space. Four years later, Kohlhörster along with fellow physicists Dimitry Skobelzyn and Walter Bothe did further work on cosmic rays.⁹ Each of these efforts, which were confined to various university laboratories, stimulated others to perform field research to gather additional data. In particular, Dr. Arthur H. Compton of the University of Chicago hoped to institute a “wide program of investigations of cosmic rays at high elevations in different parts of the earth.” Out of research

came a recognition that cosmic ray intensity increased in high latitudes as well as high elevations. For that reason, a popular publication stated that “likely points for finding the cosmic ray are believed to exist in Alaska, Hawaii, New Zealand, Australia, Peru and Mexico.” By January 1932, a brilliant electrical engineer from Bell Telephone Laboratories, Allen Carpé, had won a grant to pursue cosmic ray research, and he planned to carry out many of his measurements “at high elevations on Mount McKinley.” In addition to his scientific talent, Carpé was an accomplished mountaineer, with several first ascents to his credit, and to assist him with his endeavor were Theodore Koven and three other colleagues.¹⁰

Carpé and his party planned to set up a research camp high on the mountain's slopes; he planned to fly in some of his supplies but hoped to have other supplies brought in by dog team. He soon made his plans known to park superintendent Harry Liek, who because of the expedition's scientific nature agreed to haul supplies from McKinley Park Station to the research camp. Carpé and “a most impressive pile of mountain climbing equipment” arrived at the station on March 27.¹¹ The three-man contingent that left headquarters on April 4 hauled most of the cosmic ray party's gear as well as that of the Lindley-Liek expedition. Then, on April 25, bush pilot Joe Crosson made the first of two flights hauling Carpé, Koven, and most of their remaining



In 1934, the first party summited Mt. Foraker's north and south peaks. The three men on the right—Chychele Waterston, Charles F. Houston, and Dr. T. Graham Brown (left to right)—reached the top of the two peaks after braving wet and snowy weather, with 30 inches of snow from one storm at their high camp. Shown at the park superintendent's house, the trio was supported on the climb by Charles Storey (left) and by Houston's father, along with their horse packer, Carl Anderson (not pictured). DENA 3065, Grant Pearson Album, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection.

equipment from Nenana to the 6,100-foot level of the Muldrow Glacier, which was opposite Gunsight Pass. (This was the first-ever instance in which a mountaineering expedition in the park was supplied by an airplane.)¹² And shortly afterwards, Crosson airdropped additional supplies to them at the 11,000-foot level. By May 3, Carpe and Koven were set up in camp, and they began their measurements. Several days later, however, tragedy struck. Carpe, apparently in the midst of a snowstorm, fell into a huge crevasse. Koven then descended into the crevasse in an attempt to retrieve Carpe. Though unsuccessful in his goal, Koven was somehow able to drag himself out of the crevasse. But due to head and leg injuries sustained during his attempted rescue, he died soon afterward. On May 11, the returning Lindley-Liek expedition members stumbled across the party's empty campsite, discovered Koven's frozen remains, and tried to piece together the grim events that led to two deaths. Their search for Carpe, however, proved fruitless; his body, entombed in the ice, was never found.¹³

Early Climbing Management

In July and August 1934, a party headed by Charles Houston made the initial ascent of Mount Foraker. In early July, the six-man party drove more than sixty miles out the park road, and then headed southwest with pack horses to Mt. Foraker's base. Three climbers ascended Foraker's north peak (17,400 feet) on August 6 and its lower south peak (16,812 feet) on August

11. The entire party returned to Savage Camp on August 28.¹⁴

Two years later, Bradford Washburn made his first trip to Mount McKinley. The man who would climb McKinley three times (once with his wife Barbara), and whose name would become virtually synonymous with high-quality photographs and detailed mapping of the mountain, came to the Mount McKinley area in mid-July 1936 at the behest of Gilbert M. Grosvenor, the longtime editor of *National Geographic Magazine*. Washburn had done his first Alaska mountain climbing in 1930, just out of his freshman year at Harvard, and because of a series of well-publicized climbs and treks he had become well-known to both his fellow climbers and to *National Geographic* readers. (Indeed, in early 1935, Grosvenor had offered Washburn a position at the National Geographic Society.) Because one of the primary reasons for the success of Washburn's 1935 Yukon expedition had been the daring, innovative photography he had taken, it should have been no surprise that Grosvenor hired him to take a series of photographs of Mount McKinley as well.¹⁵ Taking off from Fairbanks, Washburn and his pilot flew on a circular route just below the peak's summit. Washburn, wearing an oxygen mask, mittens, and a cold-weather flying suit, sat on an old gas can and took photos from an open-air compartment (the plane's door having been removed). After enduring these conditions for two days, he noted that his "interest in [McKin-



Bradford Washburn's intense interest in Mt. McKinley and the surrounding region, and his extensive work photographing and mapping the area, increased the knowledge of climbing possibilities in the region. From aerial reconnaissance and photographs he studied new climbing routes on the mountain. This 1947 picture of Bradford Washburn shows him preparing for one of his many aerial photography flights, which began in July 1936. DENA 5438, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

ley's] peaks and glaciers was so whetted that I returned in 1937 and 1938" to make additional photographic reconnaissances.¹⁶ So far as is known, Washburn never set foot in the national park at any time during the 1930s.

In the years prior to World War II, mountain climbing was practiced by a relative handful of outdoorsmen, and only a smattering of those in the climbing fraternity plied their craft within the boundaries of the various national park units. Mountain climbers, then as now, could be notoriously independent, and for the most part they bridled at the imposition of any restrictive regulations. NPS officials, to a large extent, were comfortable with their hands-off role, and prior to the 1930s, there were no agencywide published rules regarding mountain climbing. The NPS's only administrative direction, in fact, was the encouraging language of the so-called Lane letter of 1918, which noted that "All outdoor sports which may be main-

tained consistently with the observation of the safeguards thrown around the national parks by law will be heartily endorsed and aided wherever possible," with "mountain climbing" being first on the list of Lane's "favorite sports." This broad encouragement was repeated, almost verbatim, seven years later by Interior Secretary Hubert Work.¹⁷ At Mount Rainier and Grand Teton national parks (established in 1899 and 1929, respectively), the NPS had sanctioned licensing and guiding activities, but the agency had not attempted to regulate the climbers themselves.¹⁸

In 1936, the year in which the *Federal Register* was first published, Interior Secretary Harold L. Ickes issued the NPS's first detailed, agencywide Rules and Regulations. Included in its provisions were statements on "mountain summit climbing" that applied to just two of the agency's national parks. Section 31 read as follows:

From the 1940s through much of the 1960s, NPS regulations directed superintendents to appoint a ranger, familiar with local climbing, to meet climbers and discuss their proposed ascents with them. Here, in July 1956, Chief Ranger Robert Branges inspects equipment of the Mexican Explorers Club climbing party prior to their attempt on Mt. McKinley. DENA 17-24, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



In Mount McKinley and Mount Rainier National Parks, mountain climbing shall be undertaken only with the permission of the superintendent of the park. To insure reasonable chances of success, he shall not grant such permission until he is satisfied that all members of the party are properly clothed, equipped, and shod, are qualified physically and through previous experience to make the climb, and that the necessary supplies are carried. No individual will be permitted to start alone for the summit of Mount McKinley or Mount Rainier.

While the Government assumes no responsibility in connection with any kind of accident to mountain-climbing parties, all persons starting to ascend Mount McKinley or Mount Rainier will fill out an information blank furnished by the superintendent and shall report to him upon return.

When the superintendent deems such action necessary he may prohibit all mountain climbing in the park.¹⁹

But by the late 1930s, the rising number of climbers throughout the country—and more specifically the recognition that occasional, well-publicized accidents demanded some sort of response—caused NPS officials to more seriously

consider a broader agencywide regulatory role. As one letter to an NPS superintendent noted in a less-than-diplomatic fashion, should a climber “have the right to commit suicide if he wants to”?²⁰ Or should the NPS play a stronger role in ensuring the protection of climbing parties?

In the spring of 1940, NPS Director Arno Cammerer, after consulting with the Advisory Committee on Hiking, wrote a memo discussing the agency’s role as it pertained to mountain climbing. He noted that:

From time to time, it has been suggested that regulations be issued to control hazardous climbing in the national parks. ... The consensus is that it would be inadvisable to impose restrictions because most climbing is done out of range of effective control. Therefore, no general regulations prohibiting climbing or other hazardous ventures will be issued at this time. ... Existing regulations and guiding practices at Mount Rainier, Mount McKinley, and Grand Teton National Parks will not be changed.²¹

Cammerer did, however, suggest the implementation of several voluntary measures. For example, he urged park staff to have climbers fill out a registration form, both before and after their hike. (As noted above, this action was consistent with language in the 1936 regulations.) He also urged each superintendent to appoint a ranger, “who is acquainted with local conditions and

climbing technique, to discuss intelligently with climbers the wisdom of proposed climbs.” For those climbers who insisted on making an ascent which was “unduly hazardous or inadvisable,” however, the ranger should tell the climbers that the trip was being made “in spite of an official warning.” Finally, Cammerer noted that “rescue work continues to be the responsibility of the National Park Service,” primarily because “there seems to be no practicable procedure whereby the individual or organization concerned can be required to pay for the expenses of rescue.” He did, however, hope that privately-operated rescue patrols (“similar to the winter ski patrols”) could be organized so that they could play some role in park rescue efforts.²²

As Pearson and others have noted, Mount McKinley became increasingly popular during the 1940s and early 1950s: just one party attempted to summit during the first half of the 1940s, four more parties made an attempt in the second half of the decade, and six attempts took place during the four years between 1950 and 1953, inclusively.²³ Some were successful ventures, while others were not.

Climbing management during this period continued to be fairly minimal. As noted in Cammerer’s 1940 climbing guidelines, potential climbers were required to register with the NPS and were urged to speak with a designated staffer about route choice, food, equipment, and general preparedness.²⁴ After the 1947 season (which featured three expeditions, two of which successfully summited Mount McKinley), those

guidelines were expanded. Park staff, under Supt. Been’s direction, prepared a mimeographed outline which compiled mountain climbers’ “mandatory requirements” plus a list of recommended supplies and equipment. This outline was sent on to the agency’s regional office and, still in draft form, was “sent on to various Park Service offices and to individuals and organizations with the request for suggestions.” These materials were first distributed in May 1948.²⁵ Park officials expected that the materials in the mimeographed information packet would eventually be incorporated as federal regulations. Mountain climbing groups, however, vigorously protested the move, so instead, the materials distributed by park staff remained informational.²⁶ Park officials, over the years, modified the materials in the information packet several times as circumstances demanded.²⁷ But by way of contrast, agencywide climbing regulations—that is, those which appeared in the *Federal Register*—underwent only minor changes during this same period.²⁸

Given these regulations and the updated information materials, the NPS was in a strong position to manage would-be climbers in the park. Most of those who tried to climb Mt. McKinley during this period contacted the park well in advance of their trip; others, however, arrived unannounced at park headquarters and explained their plans to the NPS at that time. Attempting to climb McKinley during this period without informing NPS would have been difficult if not impossible, considering the fact that all but one of the Mount McKinley climbing expeditions



This 1957 Mt. McKinley expedition, approaching overland from the park road to the Muldrow Glacier, is making the classic preparations for their overland trek, organizing food and equipment amidst that great challenge of the tundra, the mosquitoes of the Wonder Lake area. DENA 17-29, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

had taken what Grant Pearson called the “well-tramped-out McGonagall-Muldraw route” that began near Wonder Lake.²⁹

The NPS’s climbing policy seemed to work well during this period. Inasmuch as Grant Pearson, who was familiar with conditions in the Alaska Range, served on the park staff (as either chief ranger or superintendent) during much of this period, he was able to provide skilled advice to potential climbers. In most cases, as it turned out, the climbing parties were adequately prepared for their venture. In only one instance did Pearson intervene. He recalled that in 1952, the Mexican Explorers Club

attempted the climb without proper equipment. [I] at first refused to let them go, because they did not have enough food. Park regulations required a 30 days’ supply; they had only 10 days’. Finally, ... I said, “I’ll let you go if you’ll promise to come back when you have only two days’ food left.” They agreed. The four reached 8,500 feet on Muldraw, got down to their food limit, and came back.³⁰

Despite Cammerer’s dictum, in his 1940 memo, that “rescue work continues to be the responsibility of the National Park Service,” park personnel during the 1940s had no effective rescue capability because of a lack of mountaineering equipment. And given the great distance and poor communications between the high peaks and park staff, NPS personnel were in no position to know if a mountaineering party was in distress. In only one instance—after the September 1944 crash of an Army Transport Command plane near Mount Deception—was a park ranger called upon to undertake a rescue effort (see Chapter 5). This effort took place only because military authorities forced the issue and provided all necessary equipment and supplies. In September 1948, ranger William Clemons represented the park at the agency’s first-ever mountain climbing and rescue training school, which was held at Mount Rainier National Park, but there is no evidence that the park increased its rescue capabilities as a result or that Clemons himself attempted to climb any of the park’s higher peaks.³¹

Mount McKinley as a Scientific Operations Base, 1947-1963

As noted above, scientific research on Mount McKinley in 1932 commenced when Allen Carpé and his assistant, Theodore Koven, performed cosmic ray experiments at the 11,000-foot level of Muldraw Glacier. Fifteen years later another ex-

pedition, of which Bradford Washburn was a key member, had cosmic ray research as a “major scientific goal.”³²

The genesis of that 1947 expedition, however, was not science but Hollywood. In 1945, James Ramsay Ullman had written a wartime adventure novel (*The White Tower*) about the Weissturm, a mythical peak in the Alps. A year later RKO Pictures, a leading movie production company, purchased the rights to Ullman’s novel, and soon afterward a studio executive named Paul Hollister called Washburn and pitched the idea of an expedition in order to obtain movie footage. Hollister showed an initial interest in Mount Everest, but Washburn convinced him that Mount McKinley, due to easier accessibility, would be a more feasible option. Washburn, given his role as the head of the New England Museum of Natural History, wanted to include science as part of the filming project; more specifically, he hoped to make it “financially possible for the museum to carry out a number of purely scientific objectives.” Hollister readily agreed to Washburn’s proposal, because a short public relations film about scientific research on the mountain would potentially be an excellent marketing tool for the upcoming feature film.³³

Hollister then contacted several Harvard scientists, after which he asked Washburn to work with them “to suggest how many ways [the] expedition might make a real scientific contribution.” Before long, their inquiries reached the U.S. Navy’s Office of Naval Research (ONR), which at that time was the primary federal agency supporting academic research. Harvard scientists, meanwhile, mentioned the upcoming expedition to several colleagues, and before long Dr. Marcel Schein, a University of Chicago physicist specializing in cosmic ray research, stepped forward and expressed an interest in the project.³⁴

Washburn, meanwhile, had been making his own plans regarding the mountain’s research possibilities, and it soon emerged that both he and Schein hoped to establish a high-altitude scientific camp. Washburn, by mid-October 1946, was envisioning a camp at Denali Pass (at elevation 18,180 feet) where “high altitude survey work and other projects ... could be carried out from a reasonably warm and comfortable base.” Scientific supplies would be parachuted to the camp, which would be the “highest observatory ever established anywhere in the world.” Schein, for his part, proposed in January 1947 a scientific program requiring a large research hut that would house a system of 300-pound telescopes, high-voltage batteries, photographic recorders,



Movie footage of background mountain scenery was filmed by RKO Radio Pictures on Mt. McKinley during Bradford Washburn's 1947 "Operation White Tower" expedition. The actual movie was filmed in the Swiss Alps. Operation White Tower Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

heaters, and an ionization chamber. Given a recognition that "the major scientific goal of the expedition was Cosmic Ray research in Denali Pass," Washburn noted, "the Army Air Force agreed to furnish air support, in order to effect the establishment of this special camp."³⁵

The expedition, dubbed "Operation White Tower," was organized in Anchorage in mid-March 1947, and the initial base camp (at McGonagall Pass) was established on March 30. The large support contingent was assembled at base camp in mid-April, after which expedition members began inching up Muldrow Glacier. Unusually poor weather retarded progress, but by May 20 Washburn and a colleague had established the beginnings of a new camp at the 16,400-foot level. That evening, however, a "wild blizzard"

began that would last for 18 hours; that blizzard, it turned out, was the beginning of the so-called "Great Storm" that would last for another nine days. Given the expedition's slow progress, Washburn on May 25 began to question the feasibility of conducting any cosmic ray work. He soon learned that the Geiger counters necessary for the research program had all been destroyed, and on May 27 he canceled the program. Upon hearing the news, Schein (who was not on the mountain, and communicated to the party via radio) protested Washburn's decision and demanded that replacement Geiger counters be flown in to Denali Pass.³⁶

The Great Storm finally ended on May 30. A week later, on June 6, eight expedition members climbed Mount McKinley's South Peak; among

The Operation White Tower expedition base camp was established at McGonagall Pass. The Muldrow Glacier is seen beyond the camp. Operation White Tower Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



them was Barbara Washburn, the first woman to reach North America's highest elevation. Then, the following day, several members continued on and climbed North Peak. Meanwhile, a military plane airdropped the constituent parts for the insulated, 9-foot-square cosmic ray hut; team members finished erecting the structure

on June 10, and replacement Geiger counters were on hand by June 16. Hugo Victoreen, the on-site director of the cosmic ray research program, conducted his research from June 17 through June 27. Schein, Victoreen, and his colleagues later reported that the data collected at Denali Pass was of great research value because,

This insulated hut was airdropped at Denali Pass, near the 18,000-foot elevation on Mt. McKinley, where Hugo Victoreen, pictured here, performed cosmic ray research for 10 days in June 1947. Operation White Tower Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection





Supplies were delivered to the Operation White Tower base camp at McGonagall Pass by this ski-equipped aircraft, landing near the center of the Muldrow Glacier. Operation White Tower Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

among other reasons, such data had previously been “attainable only in short-duration plane flights.”³⁷ Several months later, Washburn wrote a report to his sponsors on the “Cosmic Ray Reconnaissance.” In that report, he reiterated that of all possible sites on the mountain, Denali Pass “appears to be the most practical point for the erection and operation of the highest cosmic ray station on the mountain to be occupied by personnel for any extended period of time,” and he further posited that “the safest, shortest, and most practical route of ground approach to Denali Pass is from Wonder Lake via McGonagall Pass, Muldrow Glacier, Karstens Ridge and Parker Pass.”³⁸

During the planning period leading up to the “White Tower” expedition—and probably

unbeknownst to both military authorities and park leaders at the time—the agency was moving to establish a policy that promised to restrict the role of aircraft in park climbing expeditions. The NPS did not have a prior policy regarding aircraft landings, but in mid-March 1947—during the same week that “White Tower” participants were meeting in Anchorage—the agency issued its initial aircraft regulations. It noted that

The landing of commercial and private aircraft within the national parks and monuments is generally incompatible with the purposes for which the parks and monuments are administered. No person shall land aircraft on land or water, on any federally owned area within any national



The Operation White Tower expedition to Mt. McKinley utilized traditional and new transportation technologies, dog team and aircraft. Earl Norris freighted supplies and equipment with his dog team to the 11,000-foot level on the Muldrow Glacier. Operation White Tower Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

park or monument, except for emergency rescue in accordance with the directions of the officer in charge of the park or monument or where such landing is caused by unforeseeable circumstances beyond the control of such person.

The NPS allowed exceptions to its general rule in five park units, one of which was Mount McKinley National Park. Landings in the park were sanctioned at the “McKinley Park Station airport” (at the east end of the park) and—perhaps in deference to the location where Bradford Washburn had conducted some of his research efforts—landings were also allowed on Wonder Lake. The slopes of Mount McKinley were officially off-limits.³⁹

The Navy’s Chief of Naval Research, Rear Admiral T.A. Solberg, retained a high degree of interest in cosmic ray research, and two years after the White Tower climb, Washburn announced to the press that Mount McKinley, after a site-selection survey, had “been proposed for the world’s highest permanent cosmic ray laboratory.” Based on his 1947 work, he averred that a site at Denali Pass was “feasible” and

that “the laboratory could be occupied for a maximum of six weeks.” Helicopters, he noted, “could be used to transport personnel 7,000 feet up the mountain, reducing the climb by at least a week.”⁴⁰

Members of the small but influential Wilderness Society read the press reports, and before long the Society’s president, Olaus Murie, expressed his concerns about the proposed project to NPS Director Newton Drury. He noted that

It may appear to some that so long as ... no road is built, or any trail, that no harm is done. ... But there are other aspects to this. I think we all agree that a national park is not merely scenery ... it embodies history, a way of life, primitive experience, early environment. ... A national park is specifically dedicated to those intangible and imponderable qualities. ... It comes as a shock that there is a proposal to invade Denali itself with the attendant aircraft traffic. To those who are sensitive to mountains ... the knowledge that Denali is no longer “the most high”, that it has been lit-

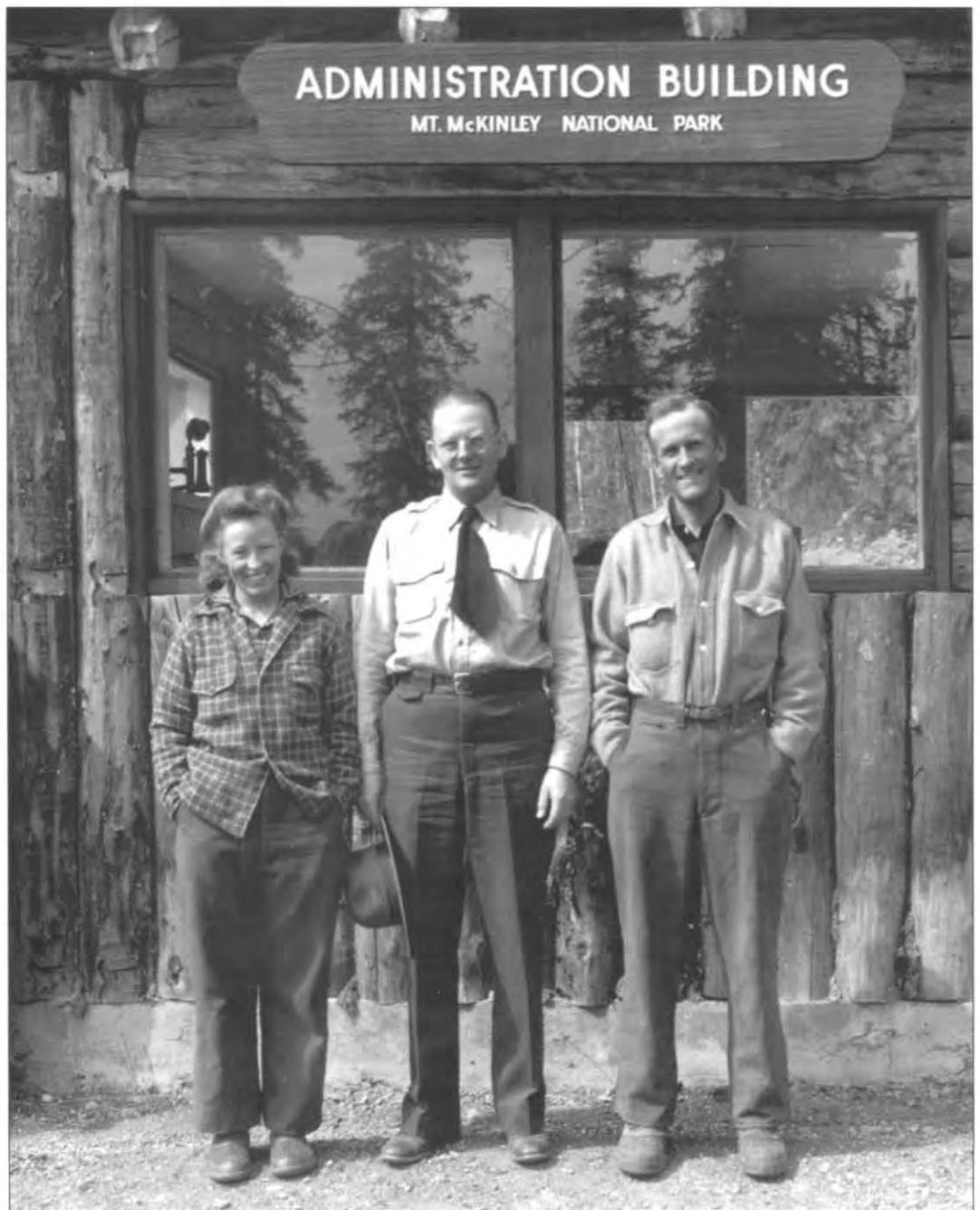
tered with the impediments of man's modern mechanical experimentation, would lower the great mountain from its pedestal, would remove the present aura of remoteness and put it in the commonplace. Why leave it a national park after that?⁴¹

Murie that day penned similar letters to Rear Admiral Solberg of the Office of Naval Research and to Dr. A.L. Washburn, the Director of the Arctic Institute.

Meanwhile, voices in the NPS spoke out. Landscape Architect Alfred Kuehl, the agency's "Alaska hand" in the San Francisco regional office, had no objection to a structure at Denali

Pass because it "would not be visible from any point on the ground" (i.e., along the park road or the Alaska Railroad). Superintendent Pearson did not disagree with Kuehl's specific statement; he did, however, feel that "never the less [the station] would do great harm to the spirit of remoteness we associate with the mountain [and] would also detract from the type of esthetics we are fostering in our National Parks." He concluded by saying, "It is not the Superintendent's intention to object to any developments which are absolutely necessary. Is this Cosmic Ray Station necessary?"⁴²

In late January, an Office of Naval Research official responded to Murie's letter. He was equivocal. On the one hand, he stated that



Pictured here in front of the Mt. McKinley National Park Administration Building are Barbara Washburn, Park Superintendent Frank Been, and Bradford Washburn after the couple spent 90 days on the Operation White Tower expedition to Mt. McKinley. Barbara Washburn participated as one of the members of the climbing team and became the first woman to reach the summit of Mt. McKinley. Operation White Tower Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

“nowhere else on the North American Continent will we be able to make continuous measurements of conditions at 18,000 feet other than on Mt. McKinley” and that “These measurements have certain importance in the scheme of things.” He also said, however, that “It is not planned at the present time to establish a laboratory on Mt. McKinley ... and will only plan it as a last resort.”⁴³

Drury, upon being apprised of the ONR letter, warned Murie that “there is ... no indication that the project is given up. We must not relax efforts to preserve the mountain, the significance of which you have presented most clearly.” Murie, soon afterward, passed his concerns on to Washburn; he stated that “I assure you I fully understand the problems that you face in nuclear research,” but he also said “that if you and others concerned with this proposal can find it possible to discover another location, it would ease the situation greatly...”.⁴⁴ Washburn, by this time, had mentioned to NPS official O.A. Tomlinson that these studies might be carried out just as successfully at the 16,000 to 18,000 foot level; if so, Washburn would recommend “another mountain in the general vicinity of Mount McKinley, which would be much easier to climb.” The Sierra Club’s board of directors, aware that 16,237-foot Mount Sanford (in Alaska’s Wrangell Mountains) was also being considered as a cosmic ray investigation site, asked the Navy in early May to give “full consideration ... to possible alternative mountain sites.” A month later, Washburn gave the Sierra Club president a message that both NPS and conservation officials were glad to receive: that as a result of a June 4 meeting attended by a variety of cosmic ray physicists, “a location other than Mt. McKinley has been agreed upon as most practical for reasons of a scientific nature, as well as climbing safety and economy of field operations.”⁴⁵ The proposed cosmic-ray station on Mount McKinley, for the time being at least, was shelved.⁴⁶

Later in 1950, the park was briefly utilized as a backdrop for new form of scientific investigation. In mid-October, the park superintendent noted that “a special group of military investigators” arrived at the park. These researchers told park staff that “the maximum intensity of the Aurora Borealis is located between McKinley Park and Fairbanks,” and based on that assumption, they brought “cameras and other equipment to study the effects of the northern lights upon radio waves and to measure their base elevation.” Their stay was apparently brief, and they did not return.⁴⁷

Despite his setback on behalf of the Navy during 1949-50, Brad Washburn persisted in suggesting Mount McKinley as a potential development site. In May 1951, just before his proposed West Buttress attempt, Washburn told a University of Alaska audience that Mount McKinley and other high Alaska peaks were being mapped for use as radar stations, weather observation points and centers of nuclear research. Two months later, after Washburn returned from his successful ascent, a Fairbanks reporter noted that “the mountain might be used in the future as a site for a fixed position radar station or cosmic ray laboratory, if such an installation is desired above the 18,000-foot level.” Days later, however, he told the Anchorage press that “a point at the 17,000-foot level” of the mountain “offers the world’s most favorable spot for a cosmic-ray station for the advancement of atomic research.” As late as 1953, he suggested in a *National Geographic* article that “McKinley’s heights also provide a lookout for observing cosmic rays.” Washburn’s 1953 article reported the results of his West Buttress climb, and although scientific goals constituted two of the three reasons for the ascent, cosmic ray research was not included as a trip justification.⁴⁸ Washburn, though unsuccessful in establishing a research station on the mountain, may have influenced a 1952 climber, Army Capt. William Hackett, to conduct some scientific research. Hackett, a veteran of successful climbs in 1947 and 1951, led a four-man party that agreed to carry “several nuclear plates coated with special emulsions to record the effect of cosmic rays striking the earth.” Whether the atomic scientists who supplied the plates gained much information, or even if the plates were hauled up the mountain, is unclear.⁴⁹

The last known proposal to utilize the upper slopes of Mount McKinley emerged during the late 1950s. After the Soviet Union successfully launched the Sputnik 1 satellite in early October 1957, U.S. authorities became far more aware of their defense vulnerabilities. Less than three months later, the U.S. responded by successfully launching its own satellite (Explorer 1), and it expanded its defensive posture through the conversion of many Nike Ajax missile sites into Nike Hercules sites, the latter missiles offering greater range and flexibility.

Given the Cold War climate and the impending space race, a Hughes Aircraft engineer named Vernal Tyler proposed the construction of a long, vertical tunnel under Mount McKinley, the primary purpose of which would be to launch high altitude space missiles. Tyler, who unveiled the plan in July 1959, noted that the idea “would be of great interest to geologists, mineralo-

gists and should capture the imagination of the public.” Implementing the plan, however, would require the construction of a 52-mile railroad spur from the Gold Creek flag stop (south of Chulitna Pass), the construction of an 18-mile horizontal tunnel, and the boring of two 10,000-foot-long vertical shafts under Mount McKinley. Tyler anticipated that his plan would not be well received by conservation groups. His most important concern, however, was selling Washington officials on a project that would cost an estimated \$80 million. Tyler, so far as is known, made little or no headway with his scheme, but four years later, two other engineers aired much the same proposal – and had similar results.⁵⁰

The Rise and Fall of Science as a Climbing Justification

The various parties who climbed—or attempted to climb—Mount McKinley during the 1940s were similar to their forebears in that they approached the mountain from the north side, and did not depend on air support. But in June 1951, a climbing party tried something new. Pilot Terris Moore, who at the time was the University of Alaska’s president, landed Brad Washburn and his party at the 8,500-foot level of the Kahiltna Glacier. Before long, Washburn and seven compatriots set off and climbed to the top of Mount McKinley, then retraced their route back the way they came. Moore met the party at its base camp, at the 10,000-foot level of Kahiltna, and flew them back to Fairbanks.⁵¹

Both of Moore’s landings, which were part of a scientific expedition, took place within Mount McKinley National Park. Several months later, in February 1952, the Harvard Mountaineering Club contacted the park and requested permission to allow supplies to be air-dropped at McGonagall Pass as part of a planned climb up Mount McKinley later that year.⁵² These two actions stirred the agency to review its March 1947 regulations about airplane landings in the park. After receiving suggestions from both agency officials and Brad Washburn, NPS Director Conrad Wirth tentatively recommended a modified policy. Although he rejected any notion of allowing airdrops, he suggested that planes could legally land on the glaciers surrounding Mount McKinley *if* they were connected to “a scientific party.” Washburn, after reading Wirth’s policy, generally agreed with its intent. He was worried, however, that a “scientific” rationale could be defined too loosely, so he hoped that the agency would limit “air support permission to real scientific expeditions. Unless such a policy is [adopted], a great many very fine climbers [in the pursuit of science], who have high standards of integrity, will be prevented from using air

support” and, if expeditions were subject to lax regulation, air support would be available to parties “that have been organized primarily for the pursuit of adventure.” Washburn went so far as to offer a series of specific criteria to define a “scientific expedition” in the park.⁵³ Park and regional officials reacted positively to Washburn’s suggestions and made only slight changes to them, and on June 16, 1952, Wirth’s office issued a policy statement relating to aircraft support. That statement noted that “the use of aircraft in connection with mountain and canyon expeditions is prohibited” except by scientific parties, and the policy provided three specific criteria for those parties. The policy did, however, give park superintendents broad discretion to permit aircraft support.⁵⁴

The agency’s new policy helped guide its response to the Harvard Mountaineering Club who, as noted above, had written to Pearson requesting permission for air support. The club’s president noted that the proposed ten-man expedition planned “to test new Army equipment on McKinley proper,” and it also planned “to conduct survey operations and geological collecting in the [Mount] Brooks area” using “a high powered theodolite supplied by Harvard University.”⁵⁵ In response, Pearson stated that the agency was “unable to grant permission for air support.” He further elaborated on why the action was necessary:

We feel that the use of air support in any but bona fide scientific expeditions will result in increasing pressures both here and in other areas of a similar nature. We feel that the climb of Mount McKinley is one of the few true mountaineering experiences remaining on this continent and that it should remain such, a conquest which yields only to those who seek to conquer without quarter asked or given.

Toward this end, it has been necessary to revise and define our concept of a scientific expedition. Its objective must be clearly within the realm of scientific, military, Federal or educational research and the application for air support must originate with the directive head of such organizations; time in the field must be spent in the pursuit of the authorized objective; and technical personnel must exist in the party at least in the ratio of one out of four. These requirements, plus final approval of the Superintendent

Members of the 1955 Kowalik Mt. McKinley Expedition were granted permission for limited aircraft use in support of their planned scientific studies for the U. S. Weather Bureau and the Bureau of Land Management. The four-man group from Anchorage, Alaska is pictured here with their pilot, Don Sheldon, second from left, at the McKinley Park airstrip. DENA 17-23, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



and an agreement of the party to file a formal report of results with the Director of the National Park Service, must be met.⁵⁶

Wirth's policy regarding a "scientific" need for glacier landings remained in place for years afterward. In the spring of 1954, for example, Superintendent Pearson noted that a five-man climbing party had asked if it could land supplies on Straightaway Glacier, northwest of Mount McKinley; in response, Pearson noted that the party "had permission for air support as they are making tests for the Ladd Field Aero Medical Laboratory and the Upjohn Pharminal [Upjohn Pharmaceutical] Company." And a year later, Pearson reiterated that NPS "authority for limited use of aircraft was granted" to a four-man party hoping to climb the mountain because one member worked for the U.S. Weather Bureau, another worked for the Bureau of Land Management, and they planned to make scientific studies for their respective agencies.⁵⁷

After the 1955 season, however, park superintendent Grant Pearson began to have second thoughts about the park's aircraft policy. For the past several years, climbers had been telling him that inasmuch as they had "limited time to make the climb ... too much time [was] consumed in the shuttling process" involved in carrying goods up from the Wonder Lake starting point. Because the NPS's regulations increased both the time and expense of any climbing in the park, "mountain climbers [were increasingly] resorting to subterfuge" (by "attempting to ... assume the position of

being a scientific venture") in "an attempt to evade the issues set forth in our regulations." Pearson, trying to respond to those demands, said that "one suggestion [which] may have some merit ... would be to allow one air drop of equipment and supplies per party at the base of the mountain." (This "base" was practically defined as a "low elevation base camp such as at McGonagall Pass.") Pearson's suggestion met with general approval, and on March 19, 1956, Wirth issued an aircraft policy statement that cancelled his earlier (June 1952) statement. It instead noted that the "approval of requests for permission to utilize aircraft for delivering supplies to mountain climbing or canyon expeditions will be made at the discretion of the Superintendent on the merit of the individual case."⁵⁸

The new rule was widely approved and appeared to have the potential to fundamentally change the way in which climbers organized their expeditions. The reality of the change, however, was that of the four expeditions that tried to climb Mount McKinley in 1956, the only one that requested an air drop lost most of its supplies in a Muldrow Glacier crevasse. And during the winter of 1956-57, a new event made the air-drop rule largely irrelevant. The Muldrow Glacier (according to Grant Pearson) "made a sudden rapid downhill movement" that "was still heaving and shifting" in June 1957. This "galloping glacier" forced at least one mountaineering party—intent on using the Muldrow—to turn back.⁵⁹

Given the lack of a north-side alternative, all nine parties that climbed Mount McKinley

between 1958 and 1960, inclusive, used Kahiltna Glacier as their access point. Because most of these parties did not have scientific permits, Talketna pilot Don Sheldon and his associates landed climbers just south of the park boundary, where they established their base camps and started their climbs.⁶⁰ (Brad Washburn, back in 1953, had clearly marked the location where the park boundary crossed the Kahiltna in a map published in the *American Alpine Journal*.⁶¹) Trip logs suggest that between 1958 and 1963, Sheldon landed most if not all climbers on the Kahiltna's main stem (at or near the 6,700-foot level). But beginning in 1962 or 1963, Sheldon and other pilots began using the Kahiltna's southeast fork, at or near the 7,000-foot level (and just inside the park boundary), a practice that became the norm in later years.⁶² During the 1950s, climbers ascending from the Kahiltna were unable to take advantage of air support, but in 1960 the NPS approved a new rule that allowed "all necessary flights [that were] required to place the desired food, gasoline, etc. at a site at 8,000 feet or lower."⁶³

Throughout this period, the Park Service's "scientific" requirements remained in place; as late as May 1960, author James Greiner noted that "All expeditions that are airlifted to points on the mountain within the geographical borders of Mount McKinley National Park must be conducted under scientific permits issued by park authorities." Greiner also noted that a would-be climber that spring, John Day, had "secured authorization for a 'photographic' expedition, a marginal category only occasionally acknowledged by authorities."⁶⁴

The Evolution of Rescue Operations

Given the increasing popularity of mountaineering outside of Alaska, climbers and climbing groups began to recognize the value of safety and rescue operations. In 1947, for example, the American Alpine Club (AAC) published its first annual edition of *Mountaineering Safety*, which reported climbing accidents and recommended safety measures to prevent their recurrence. Over the next several years, a number of mountain rescue teams were established, and by 1958 these groups—operating under the AAC's auspices—formed the Mountain Rescue Association and held an initial meeting.⁶⁵

In Alaska, however, no civilian rescue groups had yet formed. Climbers—including those intent on tackling Mount McKinley—knew that they were on their own. Language in the agency's 1936 climbing regulations, as noted above, stated that "the Government assumes no responsibility in connection with any kind of accident to mountain-climbing parties," and prospective climbing parties were apprised that NPS personnel did not have the technical expertise to perform most rescue missions.

The question of who should coordinate rescue operations (if and when they did occur) changed during the 1940s. In 1940, as noted above, the NPS director noted that "rescue work [within all park units] continues to be the responsibility of the National Park Service." But in Alaska, the U.S. military—both the Army Air Corps and the Navy assumed an increasing search-and-rescue role during World War II. Military authorities

The 1954 Thayer Expedition, George Argus, Elton Thayer, Morton "Woody" Wood, and Les Viereck, departed by train from McKinley Station. On April 17th they began snowshoeing from Curry on the Alaska Railroad to Wonder Lake, completing the first south-north traverse of Mt. McKinley and the first ascent via the South Buttress. The group had successfully reached the summit and was descending by Karstens Ridge when Thayer was killed in a fall. DENA 17-15, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



willingly offered their support, and resources, during civilian wartime emergencies, and when hostilities ended, the military continued to offer search-and-rescue assistance. By the spring of 1945, the U.S. Air Force had established a search and rescue center at Ladd Air Force Base, near Fairbanks, and in December of that year, the military's role was formalized when the newly-established Alaskan Air Command assumed control of rescue coordination activities on the territorial mainland. (Three months later, Air Force officials in the "Lower 48" established the Headquarters Air Rescue Service. It later evolved into the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center, which played a role in rescue activities throughout the country.)⁶⁶

After that date, the military continued to have an official role in search and rescue activities in the park (as well as elsewhere in Alaska), and by the spring of 1952—when NPS authorities began demanding that climbers have a "stand-by party who can come to their aid in case of emergency"—the military's 10th Rescue Squadron assumed that role.⁶⁷ The Alaska Rescue Coordination Center's role lay untested, however, until May 1954, when two different events demanded the military's rescue capabilities. Early that month, a five-man party led by Dr. Donald McLean tried to ascend Mount McKinley via the previously-untried Northwest Buttress route. Beginning their ascent on Straightaway Glacier, the party successfully climbed North Peak, but a small plane supplying the expedition was not so lucky. The Piper, piloted by Lake Minchumina resident Richard Collins and with his wife Jeanne on board, was forced down by wind turbulence at the 8,500-foot level of Peters Basin. Hours later winds demolished the plane; the Collinses, however, were unhurt. The next day, the U.S. Air Force's 74th Air Rescue Squadron arrived with a helicopter and hauled them to safety. The Collins's plane remained on Peters Glacier until a 1987 glacial surge pulverized and buried what was left of it.⁶⁸

During the same month that the McLean party was on the mountain, a four-man party led by NPS Ranger Elton Thayer was climbing the peak via Ruth Glacier and the South Buttress. All four summited successfully, and they seemed well on the way toward completing the first traverse of Mount McKinley. But on the way down, at the 13,800-foot level of Karstens Ridge, Thayer—who was roped to the other climbers—tumbled down a 1,000-foot slope and was killed. The other expedition members fell as well; George Argus seriously injured his hip and also suffered additional injuries. Leslie Viereck and Morton Wood, though shaken and battered in the fall, did

what they could to help. They fashioned a litter that brought Argus down to the 11,000-foot level of Muldrow Glacier, where they made Argus as comfortable as possible and left him with food and fuel; they then headed down to Kantishna, where they met NPS Superintendent Pearson and Chief Ranger Dick, who were out on the season's first patrol. NPS authorities then called the Air Force, and on May 26th—ten days after the group's accident—a helicopter from the 74th Air Rescue Squadron, based at the Army Arctic Indoctrination School at Big Delta, landed at the 5,600-foot level of Muldrow Glacier. (No available helicopter, in those days, could land at a higher elevation.) Squadron members then hiked up to Argus. Six days later, the eight-man contingent—one of whom was Dr. John McCall, who had climbed the peak in 1948—flew to the Kantishna Airstrip. Argus was then taken to an Anchorage hospital where he underwent extensive treatment for his injuries.⁶⁹

In 1956, the responsibility for Alaska search and rescue operations was formalized in the first-ever National Search and Rescue Plan, which was signed by President Eisenhower. That document stated that the U.S. Air Force would be the single federal agency responsible for federal-level search and rescue for the inland regions (throughout the Lower 48) and throughout Alaska. And regulations issued in the wake of that plan stated that the Air Force's Alaskan Air Command was responsible for all Alaska search and rescue operations outside of southeastern Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. This nationwide plan has been revised a number of times during the last half-century, but in all of these revisions, the U.S. Air Force has remained the primary coordinating entity for all search and rescue activities in Mount McKinley (later Denali) National Park and elsewhere on the Alaskan mainland.⁷⁰

By the late 1950s, the locus of the military's rescue activities had shifted to Anchorage, because in the spring of 1958, a spokesman for the Air Force's 374th Air Rescue Squadron, located at Elmendorf Air Force Base, announced that "in case of serious injury to a person in a remote area" of the park, it would "remove the victim ... by helicopter," but only at the NPS's request and only in "life or death" situations.⁷¹ The following year, student members of the University of Alaska's Alpine Club offered to "stand by to assist if necessary" in rescue efforts. Rescue groups were not needed in either 1958 or 1959, however.⁷²

A major air rescue effort took place in May 1960 because of distress among two Mount McKinley climbing parties. Helga Bading of Anchorage, who headed a five-person party, began to suffer

from a “moaning hysteria” brought about by cerebral edema, then known as “altitude sickness.” At the same time a nearby four-man party had fallen 400 feet resulting in a broken leg (to John Day), a concussion (to Pete Schoening), and lesser injuries to the two other climbers (brothers Lou and Jim Whitaker). Given this “double disaster,” a member of Bading’s party radioed for help to Air Force’s Tenth Rescue Squadron, in Anchorage, which was the operating unit for the Alaska Rescue Coordination Center. This call resulted in chaos: poorly-prepared Army helicopters raced to the scene—only to be forced back—and more than fifty climbers from Seattle, Portland, and Anchorage gathered in Talkeetna, where they awaited further instructions.

Bradford Washburn, upon hearing (while he was home in Boston) about Bading’s precarious situation, asked veteran Talkeetna fixed-wing pilot Don Sheldon to help. Sheldon, in a daring move, landed on a “fairly level glacier” at the 14,200-foot level and took Bading to safety. But another small plane, with a civilian pilot and a U.S. Air Force observer, met with tragedy; while trying to drop supplies to Day, the plane stalled in a turn and crashed into a cliff, instantly killing both occupants. Shortly afterward, a Hughes Helicopter Service pilot, Link Luckett of Anchorage, was able to land on a 17,230-foot ledge near Day. Luckett then removed Day, and later Schoening, down to the makeshift, 14,200-foot-elevation airstrip that Sheldon had just pioneered. Sheldon then hauled them, along with many of the Lower 48 climbers who were assisting in the rescue effort, to another glacier airstrip at elevation 10,200 feet and on to Talkeetna.⁷³ (Because they were inside park boundaries, use of the 14,200-foot and 10,200-foot “airstrips” were allowed only in emergency situations.) A month later, a member of the eight-man Glenn Kelsey party also required an air rescue; Sheldon had to evacuate him due to “mountain sickness.”⁷⁴

The deaths, and the haphazard approach to the Day-Bading parties’ plea for help, demanded a new look at search and rescue operations in the park. Two solutions quickly came forth. First, “a group of mountain climbers, skiers, riverboat enthusiasts and skin divers” calling themselves the Alaska Rescue Group (ARG) formed in the summer of 1960. They were primarily based in Anchorage, and among their membership, “nearly a dozen have climbed Mt. McKinley, and others participated in the recent Day Party rescue effort.” NPS officials welcomed the new group and approved their interest in becoming a standby party for future Mt. McKinley climbs, and they quickly revised their mountaineering information sheet to suggest that the new group would be

the climbers’ primary standby party. In December 1960, park officials met with the group and recommended that “a formal rescue agreement between the park and the rescue group should be formulated.”⁷⁵ Soon afterward, however, they learned of the U.S. Air Force’s coordinating role. Within a month the NPS had formulated a new, draft agreement between the military, the NPS, and the ARG. But Alaskan Air Command officials, upon seeing the agreement, let NPS officials know that given the Air Force’s role, “it would be impossible to commit the Alaskan Air Command to an agreement such as you suggest.”⁷⁶ To resolve the matter, representatives from the Air Force, the NPS, and the ARG met at Elmendorf Air Force Base in late April 1961. They mutually agreed that “since the RCC [the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center] directs and is responsible for any assistance required, ... no agreement is needed between the NPS and the Alaska Rescue Group.” Climbing parties, however, were free to “contact the Alaska Rescue Group for their standby party, as the ARG will be the first group to be contacted in an emergency by the RCC.” The Air Force promised to keep NPS officials informed about any search and rescue operations that it coordinated. The NPS, for its part, stated that it retained the right to “take initial search and rescue action if such appears advisable.” This arrangement laid the groundwork for future search and rescue operations, and it continued for most of the remainder of that decade.⁷⁷

The second response to the Day-Bading parties’ difficulties was the Park Service’s decision to recommend changes to the existing mountaineering requirements. The American Alpine Club was asked to coordinate that effort, and to that end representatives from the NPS, the Boston Museum of Science, and the American Geographical Society met with the club president in New York in January 1961. The group suggested specific changes related to the “scientific expeditions” criteria, air drops, radio availability, and other topics.⁷⁸ These proposals were forwarded to NPS Director Conrad Wirth. Minor changes were then made by Washington and regional officials, and they were implemented in time for the 1961 mountaineering season.⁷⁹

Mountaineering Growth, 1961-1966

As the previous sections have suggested, climbing Mount McKinley during the years prior to 1960 was a singular feat; it was done very occasionally and was considered newsworthy because of its rarity. During both the 1940s and the 1950s, there were many years in which no one successfully summited either North Peak or South Peak, and the busiest year on the mountain had been 1954, when a record three parties



The town of Talkeetna became the hub for mountaineering access to Mt. McKinley by airplane. The airport was a small village strip adjacent to the town, and can be seen at the end of the road in this 1956 photo, which looks south. Alaska Railroad Collection, BL79-2-3857, Anchorage Museum of History & Art

and fourteen mountaineers reached the top. At the close of the 1959 climbing season—almost fifty years after the Sourdoughs’ first successful ascent—only 17 parties had climbed one or both of McKinley’s two highest peaks. Those parties constituted 81 members. But James Gale climbed it twice (in 1947 and 1951); Brad Washburn climbed it three times (1942, 1947, and 1951), and Capt. William Hackett climbed it five times (1947, 1951, 1952, 1954, and 1958). Given those repeat climbs, just 74 people (73 men and 1 woman, Barbara Washburn) had successfully summited Mount McKinley between 1910 and 1959, inclusively.⁸⁰

Beginning in 1960, however, climbing Mount McKinley became a less intimidating activity, and attempts to ascend the peak became increasingly commonplace. As noted above, several parties climbed the peak in 1960; that year, 23 men reached the top. Each year since that time, at least two parties have successfully climbed Mount McKinley, and during the 1960-66 period an average of more than 20 climbers summited each year. Gone were the days in which merely climbing the mountain was a triumph; instead, those who made news on the mountain did so when they by climbing new routes. Parties during this period, to an increasing degree, included either women or older climbers. In addition, the mountain—which previously had been of interest primarily to Americans—became a magnet to

climbers from all over the world. One observer noted that “as the decade [of the 1960s] began, climbing in the McKinley Group [of peaks] was attaining a decidedly international flavor. ... The laughing, mostly non-English-speaking groups of Oriental climbers have become commonplace on the gravel main street of Talkeetna.” And a few years later, a local resident noted that “it became common place to hear the Japanese, French, German and Swiss languages on Talkeetna’s Main Street.”⁸¹

The village of Talkeetna, indeed, was the new center of activity for all those interested in climbing Mount McKinley and other Alaska Range peaks. As noted above, climber Brad Washburn and pilot Terris Moore had pioneered a new, shorter route up McKinley in 1951 that began at an improvised airstrip on Kahiltna Glacier. Moore, that year, flew his party in from Fairbanks.⁸² But beginning in 1958, the great majority of McKinley climbs began at Talkeetna (which in 1960 had a population of 76), because the village was neatly sandwiched between Anchorage and the Alaska Range. It had a railroad station where climbers could detrain, and it also had an airstrip for small planes. Talkeetna became more accessible in 1962 when a dirt spur road was pushed through from Anchorage.⁸³

Talkeetna, because of its airstrip, had pilots willing to take climbers to Kahiltna Glacier. The



Aviation pioneer Cliff Hudson is pictured here at the Kahiltna Glacier base camp with his wheel- and ski-equipped aircraft. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

first such pilot was Glen Hudson, who arrived in 1947 and first flew to Kahiltna Glacier—apparently unrelated to a mountain climbing expedition—in a ski-equipped Aeronca.⁸⁴ Another was Don Sheldon, who had run Talkeetna Air Service since 1948; he had been working with recreational climbers since 1953, and “as the 1950s drew to a close” (according to his biographer), “Sheldon’s name and reputation were well known in mountain-climbing circles the world over.”⁸⁵ Sheldon had two employees, Mike Fisher and Frances Twigg, who also took climbers to and from Kahiltna Glacier. Given the escalating popularity of mountain climbing, new pilots appeared on the scene. They included Cliff Hudson (who was already a pilot by the time his brother died in an August 1951 plane crash) and Ken Holland; these men, like Sheldon, also served other clients including miners, hunters, and highway construction crews.⁸⁶ These pilots blazed the pathway for today’s glacier pilots.⁸⁷ The exact location of the Kahiltna landing area, as noted above, was on the Kahiltna’s main stem (and outside of the park) during the late 1950s and early 1960s, but beginning in 1962 or 1963, Sheldon located a new landing spot on the glacier’s southeast fork (and just inside the park boundary). An NPS mountaineering ranger from the mid- to late 1960s stated that the landing area, so far as he knew, was inside the park and that the agency accepted the arrangement because it was “sort of an established thing.” But a longtime air-taxi operator felt that the landing area during this period was outside of the park, and Art Davidson, who landed there in January 1967 to begin his winter ascent, noted in *Minus 14*⁸⁸ that “Sheldon cruised

low over the Kahiltna, turned east to a tributary glacier, and landed just outside the McKinley Park boundary at an altitude of seven thousand feet.”⁸⁸

Given the southward shift in mountain climbing activity, NPS officials at first responded with on-site inspections; in April 1960, for example, park rangers traveled to Talkeetna and met with two Japanese climbers to inspect their gear and assess their preparedness. As the 1960s unfolded, however, rangers curtailed their inspections and instead relied on a two-pronged management strategy. First, they carefully scrutinized all applications and corresponded sufficiently with climbers to ensure that applicants were prepared for what lay ahead of them. (Many climbers also corresponded with Brad Washburn during this period, because he was considered the mountain’s top authority during this period.) And second, NPS continued the rescue policy that had been set in 1960. That policy stated that all climbers had to obtain the approval of a qualified, Alaska-based rescue organization such as the Alaska Rescue Group or, later, the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Obtaining this policy ensured that the designated rescue group would, if necessary, come to the aid of a distressed party. But these organizations, even more than the NPS, were so demanding in their approval requirements that none but the most well-prepared climbing groups were given permission to climb in Mount McKinley National Park.⁸⁹

Throughout the early to mid-1960s, Alaska’s (and Mount McKinley’s) search and rescue



Don Sheldon, who established his Talkeetna Air Service in 1948, is pictured here with his airplane in 1955. Bradford Washburn Collection, 57-6105, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

center was the Rescue Coordination Control Center, which operated out of Elmendorf Air Force Base beginning in 1961. The military, as it had for years, continued to play a titular role in mountain rescues. Pragmatically, however, their role was fairly limited. As noted in a January 1961 interagency agreement, the NPS (and more specifically, the park superintendent) played the primary coordinating role. If needed, the NPS (as noted above) would call on the Alaska Rescue Group or other approved group; the military, for its part, pledged to provide transportation to the mountain for rescue-group members. But the NPS also had the option to call on private entities for help. As it turned out, there were relatively few McKinley rescue calls during the

early to mid-1960s. When rescuers did request help, NPS officials in most cases called on Don Sheldon, the Talkeetna pilot.⁹⁰

Prior to the early 1960s, all parties attempting to climb Mount McKinley or other nearby peaks made their own arrangements. But given the growing popularity of climbing during this period, the demand grew for guided mountaineering, and in the fall of 1962, Richard McGowan from Edmonds, Washington (who had climbed the West Buttress route that June) initiated paperwork with NPS officials for a guiding permit. Since 1956, McGowan had been Mount Rainier's chief guide, and he had also climbed on Mount Everest. Representing the Mountain Climbing



The Sheldon Mountain House has been used as a base camp for skiers, mountaineers, and sightseers from 1966 to the present. Brian Okonek Photo

Guide Service, he received a special use permit in time for the 1963 climbing season.⁹¹ Soon afterward, however, he ran into problems. The Alaska Rescue Group, which had offered backup assistance to virtually all climbing parties for the past several years, refused to serve as a standby party for a commercial venture; the sole party that McGowan guided up the mountain failed to reach the summit; and in late 1963, the agency suspended his special use permit.⁹² For the next several years, no guides were authorized to lead climbs up Mount McKinley or other park peaks.

During the mid-1960s, a new way of enjoying McKinley's high country opened up that did not require advanced mountaineering techniques thanks to Don Sheldon, of Talkeetna Air Service. Sheldon, who had first explored the wonders of the Ruth Amphitheater in April 1955, recognized the surging interest in Mount McKinley as a tourist destination, so during the winter of 1965-66 he decided to build a hexagonal, 16-foot diameter structure on a rocky spire at the southern end of the amphitheatre, just west of Mount Barrille. After flying in materials, he and several friends built the prefabricated "Mountain House." On May 11, 1966 he invited more than 30 friends to the site for a grand opening "luau." Six months later, he filed on a 4.9-acre headquarters site surrounding the crag. Sheldon anticipated that the structure would be used as a summertime base camp for skiing, mountain climbing, and sightseeing.⁹³ Don patented the parcel in June 1973. After his death in January 1975 his widow, Roberta, managed the site for the next 30-plus years.⁹⁴

As noted above, the 1957 Muldrow Glacier surge had a strong impact on how climbers ascended Mount McKinley. Although almost all climbers before June 1957 approached the mountain from the north side and brought their supplies along with them, the great majority of post-1957 climbers started their treks on the Kahiltna Glacier after flying there from Talkeetna. This pattern was not universally true, however, and beginning in 1961, at least one climbing party each year during the early to mid-1960s (except 1965) headed up the mountain's north side from the park road.⁹⁵

The 1967 Wilcox Disaster and Its Impact on Climbing Policy

The year 1967, in which Alaskans celebrated the centennial of the Alaska Purchase from Russia, proved to be the most popular year to date for climbing Mount McKinley. Early that year, an eight-man party set out to make the peak's first-ever winter ascent. One died on the way up.⁹⁶ On March 1, three of the remaining seven—Ray Genet, Dave Johnston, and Art Davidson—reached the summit. Immediately afterward, however, an unprecedented week-long storm descended on the group, and as Davidson noted in his book *Minus 148°*, the men nearly died as a result.⁹⁷ An expensive rescue effort was undertaken, complete with a helicopter (brought up from Seattle) that airlifted out three climbers.⁹⁸

Later in March, the NPS issued a new version of *Mountaineering in Mount McKinley National Park*, a mimeographed guide to would-be climbers in the park. This guide, as noted above, had first been produced in 1947-48 and had been

Pictured here is the twelve-man Wilcox-McKinley Expedition, made up of the nine-man Wilcox party and the three-man Colorado McKinley Expedition, which attempted to climb Mt. McKinley in July 1967. A combination of severe weather and other obstacles resulted in the deaths of seven climbers from this expedition. Mountaineering Records, DENA 13611, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



revised several times since then, most recently in 1961, 1962, and 1963.⁹⁹ The guide had become more detailed over time; the 1952 revision, for example, had been just 4 pages long, but by 1967 it had grown to 9 pages. It incorporated the agency's federal regulations pertaining to park climbing, but in addition it contained warnings, food and equipment advice, reporting requirements, recommended ascent routes, and references for further information. The 1967 revision, which reflected a tightening of the rules since the early 1960s, stated that air support of any kind (air drops included) was "not permitted within the National Parks and Monuments without the written permission of the Superintendent." It reiterated a rule, that had been in place since 1959 if not earlier, that all climbing parties "must consist of at least four members;" ideally, the group should be larger than four members because of its "greater inherent strength and self-rescue capability." It also continued to recommend, as it had since late 1960, that climbers make written arrangements with "the Alaska Rescue Group or other qualified groups" in case of an emergency. Finally, it stated that, beginning in January 1968, all future "extended" expeditions in the park needed to carry a two-way radio.¹⁰⁰

More than 60 mountaineers summited Mount McKinley in 1967, more than twice the number of any previous year. Most went by way of the West Buttress route and climbed the mountain safely

and without incident. But that July, a twelve-man group called the Wilcox-McKinley Expedition met with disaster on the mountain. The expedition—which was an NPS-mandated amalgamation of a nine-man group headed by Joe Wilcox and the three-man Colorado McKinley Expedition, headed by Howard Snyder—decided to climb the peak up the north side, via Karstens Ridge. Internal conflicts between the two groups, a tremendous (Class 6) windstorm that descended on the mountain, poor radio communications, a confusing, tardy rescue effort, and perhaps other factors played a role in the deaths of seven climbers. The seven, all part of Wilcox's original group, died high on the mountain, at the 17,900-foot level or above.¹⁰¹

The scope of the disaster, plus the attendant publicity that it generated, forced both NPS officials and the climbing community to examine what went wrong. Some of that post-accident analysis was fairly immediate; additional thoughts came many years later.¹⁰² The American Alpine Club, and others in the climbing community, had been pushing for some time for a relaxation of the NPS's climbing rules, which called for rangers to check climbers' gear, among other provisions. That effort, which continued in the months after the climbers' tragedy, eventually brought about a change in policy. As a latter-day superintendent noted, the agency sought a new rule "primarily because mountaineers objected to [the existing



Lenticular clouds engulfing Mt. McKinley indicate the presence of high winds. The Wilcox-McKinley Expedition encountered extreme winds at their highest camp, compounding their troubles. NPS Photo, Denali National Park and Preserve

rule].”¹⁰³ The NPS provided its own reason for steering a new course; as chief ranger Arthur Hayes noted at the time, “While every effort is made to increase climber safety by a fair and rigorous screening [of climbers’ gear], it is impossible to be sure that correct judgments are made in all cases.”¹⁰⁴

Three years later, NPS officials enshrined the new climbing philosophy as agency rules. In March 1970, the agency proposed three park climbing regulations. First, all parties interested in climbing either Mount McKinley or Mount Foraker¹⁰⁵ needed to register, and registration needed to include both a statement of each member’s climbing experience and a doctor’s statement testifying to each member’s physical fitness to undertake such a climb. Second, all parties needed to carry “a two-way radio capable of reaching another manned station in ready contact with park headquarters.” And third, “as soon as practicable” after the climb, party members needed to “report in with park headquarters.” This proposed rule proved non-controversial, and after minor modifications it was finalized in mid-August 1970.¹⁰⁶

These rules, however, were not enforced, and several of them were apparently honored in the breach. As noted in a 1974 news editorial,

Since 1967, there has been no requirement to have a permit before climbing the mountain. The old system

granted permission only after a park official checked gear and evaluated the team. Now the philosophy is that Mt. McKinley is the people’s mountain, and it’s up to the climber to arm himself with gear and judgment before climbing it. Park officials do make an effort to inform climbers of dangers and ask them to report back, but no one [will] be denied a chance to climb the mountain.¹⁰⁷

A substantially different idea that surfaced in the wake of the tragic 1967 climbing season was the construction of a structure at the 17,200-foot level of Mount McKinley’s West Buttress. Dr. Peter Morrison of the University of Alaska’s Institute of Arctic Biology proposed the structure, with the full support of Bradford Washburn from the Boston Museum of Science. He envisioned that it would serve three purposes: a rescue base for search parties, “a laboratory for both planned experiments and for observations on climbers ascending and descending,” and an emergency shelter. Morrison, who had applied for a \$200,000 Defense Department grant that would provide funding for such a structure, pitched the idea to park superintendent George Hall, who was “extremely cordial and cooperative” with him. Morrison, at the time, was also proposing the establishment of an Alaska Mountaineering Center at the University of Alaska campus, of which the West Buttress structure would play a key role.¹⁰⁸ Later that fall, Washburn pushed for

a support structure farther down the mountain. In a letter to Washington-based NPS officials, Washburn stated that

I don't know of any other major peak in the world that is climbed as frequently as is McKinley that hasn't got adequate shelter somewhere on its slopes, let alone at its base. A shelter of appropriate design and moderate size at, say, McGonagall Pass would not only serve as a valuable spot in which to safeguard supplies and provide shelter at the beginning of an ascent, but it would also provide a much-needed headquarters for rescue operation in time of tragedy.¹⁰⁹

Washburn's suggestion (which he had previously made during the mid-1950s) made little headway, but Morrison's Institute of Arctic Biology was successful in his grant request, and according to a news report, "a team of science specialists" gathered in Fairbanks in late 1967 "to determine what physiological and psychological tests could best measure men's performance, both on the mountain and in the institute's laboratories." With the "full cooperation" of the NPS, and with logistical help from Don Sheldon and Wien Consolidated Airlines, researchers representing "Project Themis" moved to establish field research camps at both the 14,200-foot and 17,200-foot levels of Mount McKinley. Operations began in June 1968. Due to high winds, the lower camp was not successful, but on the "flank of McKinley's Denali Pass area," Morrison—assisted by Art Davidson—established and ran a tent camp. For two weeks in July, researchers collected meteorological data and "explor[ed] for the first time the debilitating effects imposed on climbers by altitude, stress, and environmental extremes." They were only partially successful, however; they conducted tests only on themselves, not on mountaineers.¹¹⁰

Mountaineering, 1968-1975: Growth, Guides, and Garbage

As noted above, mountain climbing swelled in popularity during the 1960s. Prior to 1960, climbing Mount McKinley was a rare feat—never before had there been more than three successful expeditions per year—but during the early- to mid-1960s an annual average of more than four expeditions and 20 individuals reached the top. During the Alaska Purchase Centennial year of 1967, a remarkable 14 expeditions and 63 people reached the top of Mount McKinley, and not long afterwards even greater numbers were being tallied. Between 1968 and 1975, in fact, an annual average of 16 expeditions and 83 climbers

At the request of Cliff Hudson, long-time climber Frances Randall became the first Kahiltna Glacier Base Camp manager, serving for nine summers. Every evening Frances would broadcast the mountain weather forecast over the radio and would often repeat it in fluent Japanese, Spanish, Russian and French. She played violin in the Fairbanks Symphony Orchestra and took her violin with her to the glacier. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

Annie Duquette was the second long-term base camp manager working for the combined Talkeetna air taxi services. She stayed for the entire climbing season of about 80 days. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection



summited Mount McKinley, while additional expeditions climbed Mount Foraker and other Alaska Range peaks.¹¹¹

In order to provide access for the swelling ranks of mountaineers, various Talkeetna-based air taxi operations (as noted above) appeared on the scene during the 1960s. By 1975, takeoffs and landings at the 7,200-foot level of Kahiltna Glacier were so common that Cliff Hudson, of



Hudson Air Service in Talkeetna, supported an informal base camp where climbers could find shelter at the beginning and end of their expeditions.¹¹² Volunteer Frances Randall stepped forward to staff this camp. Back in 1964, as part of a 15-person party, she had been only the fourth woman to summit Mount McKinley. Randall loved the job at the Kahiltna base camp and became a fixture there through the 1983 season. Her death, of cancer in 1984, was a loss keenly felt by Alaska's climbing community.¹¹³ The other well-known Kahiltna personality over the years—variously described as an “air-traffic controller, messenger, nurse, surrogate mother, and shrink”—was Annie Duquette (“Base Camp Annie”), who worked there from 1991 to 2000.¹¹⁴

Between the late 1960s and the mid-1970s, a major new element in Mount McKinley mountain climbing was the emergence of professional guiding. The first such long-term guide was Raymond E. Genet. In 1967, as noted above, he had taken part in the first successful wintertime ascent of McKinley, and he followed that feat with additional McKinley summits in August 1967 and May 1968. Soon afterward he applied to the NPS for a special use permit, and in June and July 1969, he successfully led a six-person party to the top of Mount McKinley. The following year, he led three more parties up the mountain: a group of three in May and June, a

group of thirteen in July, and a group of four in August and September.¹¹⁵

Between 1971 and 1975, Genet and his company—variously called Alaska Mountain Guides, Inc. and Genet Expeditions—was the primary avenue by which commercial clients were guided up Mount McKinley.¹¹⁶ Genet, as an Alaska-based provider, assumed—or perhaps hoped—that he would be able to serve as either an exclusive or preferred guide.¹¹⁷ NPS officials, however, had no specific prohibitions over the issuance of special use permits to Lower 48-based guiding companies, so as a result, Bay Area-based Mountain Travel, Inc. led trips up McKinley beginning in 1970, and Tacoma-based Rainier Mountaineering led trips up the mountain beginning in 1974. Several other companies during this period advertised trips up McKinley; it is not known, however, if they actually guided parties on the mountain. (A permit was also issued to a resident of nearby Hurricane, but the permit holder may not have used it.)¹¹⁸

Another person that was part of the park guiding scene during this period was Berle Mercer, a rancher from Lignite.¹¹⁹ In the summer of 1967, Mercer had supplied horse packing services for the ill-fated Wilcox-McKinley Expedition.¹²⁰ His involvement with the park, however, extended back a decade or more. In 1957, NPS officials had been in touch with him because his cattle—grazing

Berle Mercer (left) operated a business that transported climbers' food and equipment with pack horses and mules from the park road at Wonder Lake to McGonagall Pass. He often aided climbers by carrying them across the McKinley River on horseback. Interp. Collection #365, Denali National Park and Preserve



in the Savage River drainage—had inadvertently wandered south into the park.¹²¹ Then, in early 1961, Mercer had approached NPS officials with an interest in conducting a summertime horse-back-riding concession. The agency provided him a special use permit for that purpose, and for several years thereafter he brought horses into the park for recreational rides.¹²² Mercer and his horses supported north-side climbing expeditions beginning in 1967. After that date, most years featured at least one Mount McKinley expedition that approached from the north side of the Alaska Range. Mercer's involvement with park climbing expeditions continued until June 1981.¹²³

By the early 1970s, the large and growing number of climbers on Mount McKinley (see Figure 4) was beginning to emerge as a public issue. A 1970 climbing-magazine article, for example, spoke of the “excessive number of people” on the West Buttress, and a 1973 news article was headlined “McKinley Like Grand Central.”¹²⁴ Given the fact that most climbers used the same route, garbage emerged as a problem. A veteran of climbs in both 1969 and 1970 noted that the

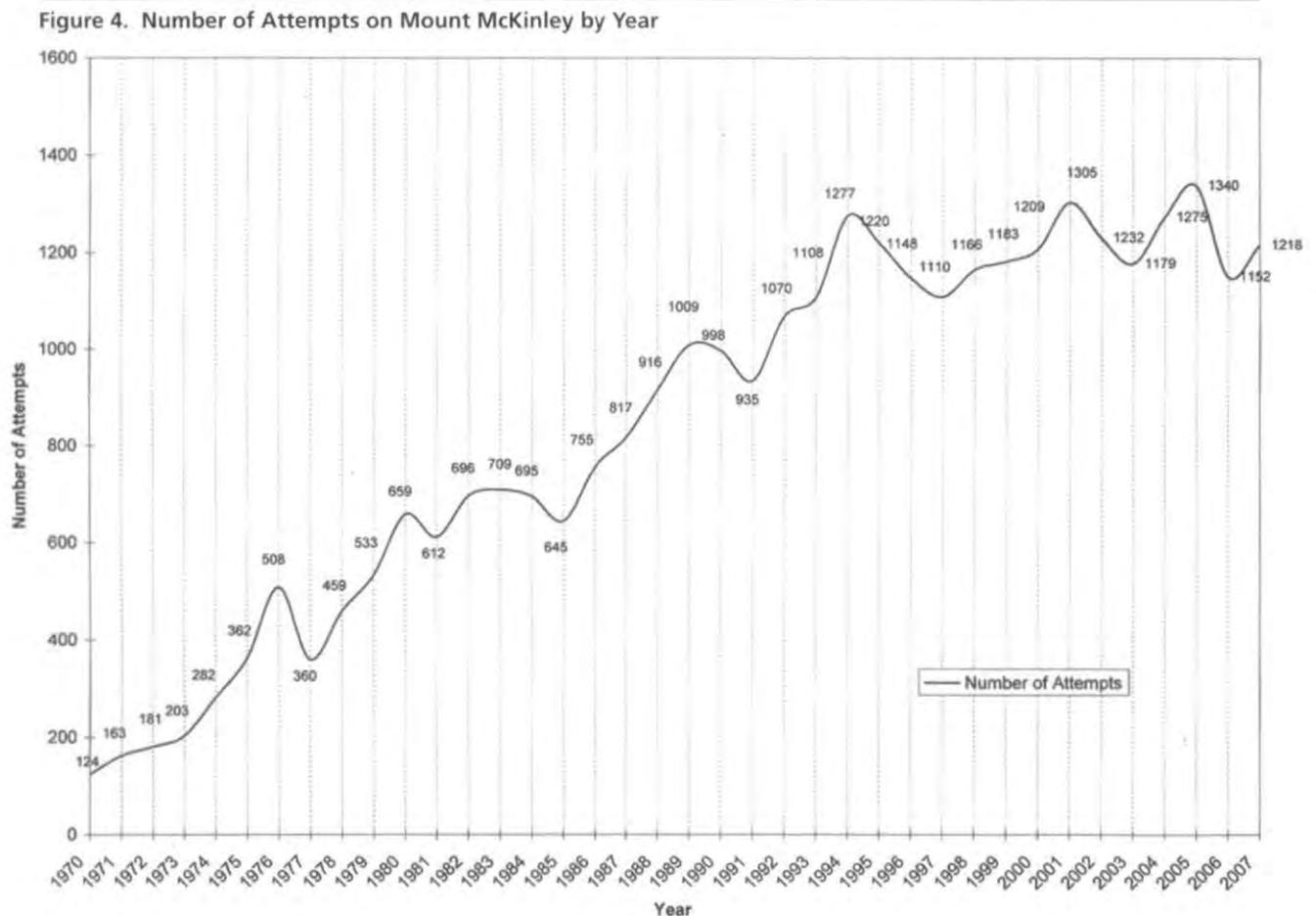
Residue of camps, their caches and garbage, are everywhere. The camps were fairly neat, but the garbage

problem became ghastly at times. In 1969 the Kahiltna Glacier was such a mess that one could easily sight from the air where camps had been located. This year, at 17,250 feet on the West Buttress, the usual high camp for the route, the site was a literal dump. Trash was everywhere. ... It takes little energy and sometimes a short amount of time, if one is up high, to dig a garbage hole three or four feet deep. ... I appeal to my fellow climbers to please make the effort and dig a hole.¹²⁵

The NPS, in response, could do little. For years it had asked hikers and others in the park's backcountry (as it had in other national parks) to follow a pack-it-in, pack-it-out philosophy, but without staff on the mountain, anti-littering rules were impossible to enforce. One writer noted that rangers “put much of the blame on inexperienced climbers who packed in more equipment than needed, then discarded it. They also pointed to increasing numbers of foreign climbers who hadn't developed a ‘Keep America Clean’ consciousness.”¹²⁶

To help, a seven-man expedition from the University of Oregon Outdoor Program, led by Gary

Figure 4. The increase in numbers of climbers attempting to climb Mt. McKinley each year, from 1970 through 2007, is illustrated by this graph. NPS, Talkeetna Ranger Station, Denali National Park and Preserve



Gary Grimm, Director of the University of Oregon's outdoor program, organized the first cleanup efforts on Mt. McKinley and continued to lead that movement throughout the 1970s. Roger Robinson Photo



Grimm, made a summit climb in May 1971. When the group reached the 17,200-foot level, it found a large dump containing paper, cans, bottles, food, new and broken equipment, underwear—even plywood doors—plus a large scatter of human waste. According to a news report, the group “burned what they could, smashed what they couldn’t burn, and back-packed as much as they could” (about 380 pounds) back down the mountain. Grimm noted that guides had left most of the trash; “they won’t bother to bring it back because their clients don’t pay to carry garbage.” He suggested that much more needed to be done, including a greater regulation of guides. The group returned to the mountain, with much the same results, in 1973.¹²⁷

A more large-scale attempt to remove trash from the mountain took place in July and August 1974, when 16 soldiers from Fort Richardson’s 172nd Arctic Light Infantry Brigade were flown by helicopter to the 10,000-foot level of Kahiltna Glacier. Assisted by two NPS rangers, they hiked up the mountain and back down to the 6,500-foot level; they burned more than a ton of flammable debris and hauled another half-ton of garbage back to Anchorage.¹²⁸ The following year, in August and September, the same military unit returned to the mountain and hauled another ton of trash away.¹²⁹

Meanwhile, the University of Oregon continued in its cleanup efforts. In 1975 its Outdoor Program made two climbs, for a total of “more than a half dozen” expeditions since it began in 1971. Grimm counseled future climbers that—how-

ever charitable their motivation might be—they should not leave caches of food, fuel, or equipment on the mountain. He also urged the NPS to stop the practice of allowing air drops to climbers; in addition, Grimm stated that climbers should be compelled to take down their own refuse or face stiff penalties. Climbers in the program, later called the Denali Rehabilitation Project, climbed again in 1976.¹³⁰

Searching for a way to deal with the ever-increasing problems of accidents, garbage, and other people-related problems, Roger Robinson, who was an avocational climber at the time, recommended that the agency 1) limit both the size and number of parties climbing on the West Buttress, 2) have more NPS contact with climbing parties and better enforcement of existing regulations, and 3) publicize the mountain’s problems to national organizations and clubs, both in the U.S. and elsewhere. Gary Brown, the park’s chief ranger, largely agreed with Robinson. He noted that “adequate enforcement is our present void, as is enforcement of all our mountaineering requirements.” To address the problem, he stated that the agency planned to have two park rangers working “between Talkeetna and the West Buttress” during the 1976 climbing season. “This would provide us with an improved check-in and check-out system. This should also provide us with improved control over trash and equipment removal,” he noted. Brown recognized that his plan did not solve the human waste problem. The “real” answer, he explained, was to limit the annual number of



Official NPS policy in 1975 recommended that climbers burn their trash. Roger Robinson Photo

On June 3, 1976, pilot Buddy Woods, in a Hiller 12-J-3 helicopter, landed one time at 20,300 feet, a few yards southeast of Mt. McKinley's summit, to drop off Ray Genet, who assisted with the rescue of two climbers. For this rescue Woods also landed two times at 16,000 feet, four times at 18,700 feet, two times at 19,600 feet, and once at 20,100 feet. Genet Photo, courtesy Talkeetna Ranger Station



expeditions, climbers, or party size. He was not yet ready to do that; he did say, however, that “we are closely reviewing the numbers crisis and look to future limitations.”¹³¹

The Bicentennial Climbing Season and Its Aftermath

NPS officials, anticipating a big climbing season in 1976, moved to put rangers on the mountain for the first time since 1961, when Richard Stenmark had been part of a successful four-man summit party. In January 1976, the agency hired Robert Gerhard, a former climbing ranger at Mount Rainier National Park, as the new East District ranger.¹³² That June, Gerhard led a six-man NPS team on what proved to be a successful 35-day traverse from Kahiltna Glacier to Wonder Lake via Denali Pass and Muldrow Glacier.¹³³ That experience, which included at least one rescue, proved invaluable to the agency's understanding of climbers' problems and issues, and it proved to be a harbinger of future NPS ranger activities in the Mount McKinley vicinity.¹³⁴

The rangers' presence came none too soon because in 1976, climbers flocked to the slopes of Mount McKinley in unprecedented numbers. To some extent, the mountain's popularity that year was bolstered by the nation's bicentennial; it was, therefore, reminiscent of the surge in climbing interest nine years earlier due to the Alaska Purchase centennial. Perhaps buoyed by a growing reputation among climbers that Mount McKinley was a “technically easy mountain,” 73 parties and 508 climbers (114 led by professional guides) started up the mountain, and 339 made it to the top. All of these figures were far greater than in any previous year. Many tried to arrange their treks so as to reach the summit on July 4;

and although weather prevented any summit attempts that day, a record 70-plus climbers reached the crest of South Peak on July 6.¹³⁵ The season was remarkable for a number of “firsts:” Tayomi Oishi skied all the way from the summit to Kahiltna Glacier; three hang gliders took the same general route, although more quickly; and guide Ray Genet helped set a helicopter altitude record when he jumped out of a helicopter on the summit plateau.¹³⁶ Also for the first time, a high Interior Department official—Assistant Secretary Jack Horton—successfully climbed the mountain.¹³⁷ But the season had a fair share of tragedy, too. Four climbers died on Mount McKinley and another six on Mount Foraker. In addition, 33 climbers were injured so seriously that they had to be evacuated. The Park Service, which was called on to coordinate rescue activities, was prepared logistically for the tasks at hand. These 21 rescues, however, proved expensive; by season's end the agency was stuck with an \$82,142 bill for these unanticipated operations (See Figure 5).¹³⁸

The season's tragedies, and expenses, brought forth an open, public debate on the degree to which mountaineering in the park should be regulated. At one end of the spectrum were those who felt that government had no business regulating climbers, while others felt that in the interests of public safety and expense, government needed to scrutinize all future climbers and, if necessary, reduce the number of climbers. Most people advocated a course midway between those extremes. As Gerhard noted in his year-end report,

Many people (mostly non-climbers, but also some mountaineers) began

Figure 5. South District Climbing and Rescue Data, 1976 to Present

Year	Number of attempts	Number of summits	Number of deaths	Search and rescues	No. of climbers assisted	Total cost of search and rescues
1976	508	339	4	26	43	\$82,142
1977	360	284	0	8	16	3,369
1978	459	270	0	7	13	13,816
1979	533	351	2	12	22	10,000
1980	659	283	8	16	23	47,335
1981	612	321	6	15	30	28,171
1982	696	310	0	16	27	74,871
1983	709	474	2	12	15	35,939
1984	695	324	2	12	14	46,432
1985	645	321	2	8	10	18,113
1986	755	406	4	8	12	42,990
1987	817	251	2	11	12	59,205
1988	916	551	2	12	18	16,790
1989	1,009	517	6	6	16	42,975
1990	998	573	3	8	13	n.a.
1991	935	557	0	8	15	n.a.**
1992	1,070	515	11	22	28	206,000
1993	1,108	670	1	16	24	70,800
1994	1,277	702	3	21	41	87,631
1995	1,220	523	6	13	32	147,167
1996	1,148	489	2	14	17	173,500
1997	1,110	561	1	13	22	157,776
1998	1,166	420	3	12	23	211,189
1999	1,183	508	0	9	14	103,950
2000	1,209	630	0	15	20	188,496
2001	1,305	772	0	10	12	56,137
2002	1,232	645	1	21	47	159,562
2003	1,179	688	0	14	16	121,312
2004	1,275	656	1	16	19	138,987
2005	1,340	775	2	13	17	115,497
2006	1,152	581	1	19	27	297,140
2007	1,218	573	2	19	23	210,857

Note: Data on summit attempts, successful summits, and deaths pertain to the South Peak of Mount McKinley, while search and rescue data pertain to all of the park unit's South District.

n.a. – Information not available. Data in italics are approximate.

** - In 1991, the NPS began contracting for the use of a Aerospatiale Lama high-altitude helicopter, which was based at the Talkeetna Airport throughout the climbing season. The cost of this helicopter was not included in the cost data noted above.

Source: NPS, "Mount McKinley South Peak (20,320 feet) Attempts and Summits;" NPS, "Climbing Deaths on Denali," both in Talkeetna Ranger Station files. Rescue data from NPS, "South District Search and Rescue Cost Summary," courtesy of Maureen McLaughlin.

demanding that the climbing parties who need to be rescued should pay the costs of their rescue. Others feel that all climbing parties should post a bond or show proof of insurance before being allowed to climb McKinley. Several outdoor organizations have proposed that all government agencies, except the military, stop providing assistance to parties that request a rescue. Many people feel that the National Park Service should re-institute the old regulations which gave us the authority to screen applicants and their equipment and deny them the right to climb if we did not feel they were qualified. A few climbers feel that guide services should not be allowed to operate on Mount McKinley since this activity allows less experienced climbers to be on the mountain.¹³⁹

In response to these questions, Gerhard suggested only that “the National Park Service regulate mountaineering activity as little as possible, with necessary restriction being recommended by or agreed to by mountaineers and mountaineering organizations.” The agency’s regional director, Russell Dickenson, agreed; he stated that “I don’t believe the Park Service ought to be making that kind of judgment. ... If it ever gets to the point where restrictions are required, it ought to be done by one’s peers.” Gerhard further noted that no major changes would be implemented in

1977. To find out more about climbers’ attitudes, he sent an informational newsletter to the leader of every 1976 climbing party. Fewer than half of those leaders responded, however, and climbers’ apparent lack of interest prevented the survey’s completion.¹⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Interior Department officials made their voices known. Assistant Interior Secretary Jack Horton, who had summited the mountain in late June, told an Anchorage reporter that he did not encourage “further government encroachment” in the form of regulating climbers. Several months later, Dickenson went a step further and told a Spokane audience that “there should be a responsibility on an organized climbing party to at least partially reimburse the government or provide for its own rescue.”¹⁴¹

In 1977 the NPS, as promised, stationed two mountaineering rangers (Bob Butts and Nick Hartzell) at Talkeetna.¹⁴² According to an NPS report, they “contacted each expedition prior to climbing. These rangers discussed routes, equipment, medical problems, hazards, and rate of ascent with virtually every climber approaching the mountains from the south side of the park.” Given the fact that the difficulties of 1976 had been so well publicized, climbers were apparently either better prepared or more prudent. As a result, no one died in the high Alaska Range in 1977. Only two helicopter evacuations were needed (one on Mt. McKinley, the other on Mt. Foraker) and just two fixed-wing rescue operations were conducted (both on Mount McKinley). As a result, air evacuation costs plum-



Rangers Nick Hartzell and Bob Butts created this simple outhouse design and constructed it in Talkeetna in 1977. The outhouse was placed above a 10-foot hole in the glacier. The last year for pit toilets at the Kahiltna Glacier Base Camp was 2005. Roger Robinson Photo

meted more than 95 percent, to just \$3,369; the government's costs for the fixed-wing rescues, moreover, were paid for by the injured climbers. The two NPS rangers played a direct role in managing climbing activities that year; they carried out two ten-day patrols along the West Buttress route, and gave three injured climbers sufficient assistance that they were able to avoid an air evacuation.¹⁴³

Recognizing the growing waste-disposal problem, Park Service rangers in 1977 initiated a "climb clean" policy that required climbers to pack out all gear, refuse, and fixed line. Their emphasis was on educating mountaineers about the policy as part of their pre-climb orientation, in Talkeetna. Rangers that year also helped install the first pit toilet on the mountain, at the Kahiltna base camp.¹⁴⁴ Climbers were reminded that "all trash, equipment, and unused food must be removed from the Park. If you carry it up, you can carry it back down." This advice, however, did little at first to ameliorate the problem; the following year, a mountaineering ranger noted that McKinley's "well-publicized garbage problem continues ... this year it appeared worse than in previous years."¹⁴⁵

In 1978, managing McKinley's climbers became more difficult. The number of climbers increased after the previous year's dip, and the weather—which had been generally good the previous two years—proved relatively stormy. The mountain, moreover, again attracted people who had no business being on the mountain. (A climber from Colorado was responsible for a "poorly organized and poorly led" 13-member group that unsuccessfully attempted the West Buttress route, and soon afterward, a climber at the 17,200-foot level requested an evacuation from both the NPS and local air services because he had a "very important business engagement" in Africa.) Two Japanese climbers were killed on Mount Foraker; in addition, eleven climbers sustained accidents that required an air evacuation; expenses related to the seven rescue operations cost the NPS \$13,816. Talkeetna-based rangers Dave Buchanan and Nick Hartzell conducted much the same program—complete with two 10-day West Buttress patrols—that agency rangers had done in 1977.¹⁴⁶

Recognizing the increasing—and public—costs associated with air rescues, various people began to clamor for climbers to offset rescue costs by posting a bond. This suggestion, as noted above, had been aired by Robert Gerhard in 1976. As far back as July 1972, however, the *Anchorage Daily Times* had called for the adoption of either bonding or insurance; in May 1976, in the midst

of the mountain's most accident-prone climbing season, it reiterated that call. Then, in early 1978, Alaska Rep. Larry Carpenter (R-Fairbanks), asked U.S. Senator Ted Stevens to get the NPS's views on the subject. In response, NPS Associate Director Daniel Tobin noted that his agency had the legal authority to recover rescue costs, through either direct billing or a bonding requirement. Tobin noted, however, that

The cost of a major search or rescue operation is well beyond the ability of most people to pay directly. Inquiries thus far have revealed that bonding, short of a full cost deposit, is not available and that conventional carriers will not underwrite insurance. Registration fees sufficient to offset rescue costs would be prohibitive to many climbers. Further, any system of recovering costs would penalize the responsible, self-sufficient, and well-conditioned parties, along with those who use poor judgment or suffer from an accident or illness. [Given that] no charges should be assessed in a way that would discourage one in distress from asking for assistance ... we question the feasibility of holding [climbers] liable for the entire financial burden. ... We believe that more intensive management of climbing activities ... will tend to keep costs at a relatively low level. ... Another year or two of experience will tell.¹⁴⁷

Guide Regulation

As noted above, the first person sanctioned to conduct guiding activities in the park was Richard McGowan, who obtained a special use permit and led a single, unsuccessful 1963 trip. The second Mount McKinley guide was Ray Genet, who led six clients to the top in June and July 1969. Until the mid-1970s, Genet's Alaska Mountain Guides was the primary guide service on the mountain, although several others were active as well. Bay Area-based Mountain Travel, Inc. began leading trips in 1970, the nonprofit National Outdoor Leadership School began in 1971, and Tacoma-based Rainier Mountaineering started there in 1974.¹⁴⁸

In 1976, the mountain was far more popular than in previous years, and of the 508 climbers who reached the top, 114 (22.5 percent) were led by professional guides. Five companies guided clients up the mountain that year: three veteran groups (Alaska Mountain Guides, Mountain Travel, and Rainier Mountaineering) along with two new organizations (Mountain Trip from

Anchorage and Fantasy Ridge Mount McKinley Expedition from Estes Park, Colorado). Most groups were well-prepared and were escorted in relatively small groups. Genet, however, amassed 44 climbers in three closely-spaced groups and shepherded them all up the mountain at the same time. Other guides complained about Genet's methods, claiming that he was "spreading [him]self too thin," and one of his clients died (of pulmonary edema) at the 17,200-foot level. During the winter of 1976-77, the NPS responded to the criticism by roughing out a proposal to issue four-year concession permits to a limited number of guides; to retain that permit, moreover, guides would need to demonstrate minimum qualifications regarding previous experience, technical climbing ability, customer satisfaction, and other criteria.¹⁴⁹ Late in 1978 they again considered the matter, but as Gerhard noted, "many questions about management of Alaska lands will remain cloudy or unanswered until after Congress acts on an Alaska Lands Bill, and permits for mountain guide service operations are caught in that current." As a result, the NPS instead chose to issue six special use permits that year to mountaineering guide services.¹⁵⁰

In 1980, Congress finally passed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. That same year, NPS authorities went ahead with its long-delayed plan. On May 1, the agency issued a prospectus for mountain guide services and asked all interested applicants to provide relevant information about their qualifications and

experience, particularly as it pertained to Mount McKinley and adjacent peaks. Fifteen firms responded to the prospectus. Between August and November of that year, a three-person panel weighed a variety of factors and offered four-year concession permits (until December 1984) to the six top candidates: 1) Aerie Northwest of Seattle, 2) Fantasy Ridge Alpinism of Estes Park, 3) Genet Expeditions of Talkeetna, 4) Mountain Trip of Kasilof, 5) North Cascades Alpine School of Bellingham, and 6) Rainier Mountaineering of Tacoma.¹⁵¹

Shortly after the permits were issued, an *Anchorage Daily Times* reporter spoke to Denali National Park and Preserve Superintendent Robert Cunningham about the new permit system. Cunningham noted that

the change to a concession system was made for several reasons ... including meeting Park Service regulations that require the use of bidding to select firms conducting commercial operations in national parks. ... [T]he new system will provide reasonable insurance to clients that their guides are experienced and economically capable of handling the demands of expeditions on Mount McKinley and other mountains. Also, ... the system will control and restrict climbers on the mountain. Commercial expeditions will be limited to 15 clients. No firm can start a second party up a mountain within 15 days of its first group's start.¹⁵²

Not surprisingly, a handful of companies that were not selected openly questioned the agency's methodology. One of those companies was the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), which was based in Wyoming but with an Alaska office in Palmer. The company had been active throughout the 1970s, and as noted in a 1976 article, the school "had a reputation for safety and good logistics on the mountain." The problem stemmed from an honest difference of opinion on how the nonprofit organization reported its revenues, and by February 1981 NPS personnel recognized that the agency "may have erred during the evaluation process." In June 1981, park personnel granted NOLS the right to continue guiding at historical usage levels (which was a single trip up the mountain) that year. That December, the solicitor's interpretation of the newly-enacted Alaska park regulations allowed a continuation of that practice in 1982, and in October 1982 the park superintendent issued a regular, four-year concessions permit (retroac-



In 1979 Ray Genet, left, and Brian Okonek, who took this picture, guided the first ascent of Mt. McKinley with a dog team. Musher Susan Butcher and Joe Redington Sr., center, took part of their dog team to the summit by the West Buttress route. The lead dog appears on the left side of this summit photo. Brian Okonek Collection

Mountaineering and aviation have been partners on Mt. McKinley since 1932. Lowell Thomas Jr., of Talkeetna Air Taxi, tested his Helio Courier on this first landing at 14,200 feet in 1983. This aircraft is capable of short takeoffs and landings, and he found it worked well for resupplying the medical camp and assisting with rescues at this location. Roger Robinson Photo



tive to January 1981) that gave NOLS much the same status as the six commercial services that had been awarded concession permits in late 1980.¹⁵³

Despite the careful, deliberative process that resulted in the selection of seven carefully-screened concessions permittees, NPS officials were slow to enforce its regulations against non-selected companies. The agency's 1981 mountaineering summary, for example, listed two unauthorized, active commercial guides from Germany and a third from Japan, and in 1983 it listed two unauthorized, active climbs conducted by nonprofit educational organizations.¹⁵⁴ The agency finally began to enforce the regulations in 1984. Citations were issued to an American and a Japanese guide; in 1985 a German guide was cited; and in 1986 violation notices were issued to two Americans and a New Zealander.¹⁵⁵

Given the fact that commercial guides escorted between 20 and 25 percent of Mount McKinley climbers up the mountain during this period, and because there was a consistently high interest in climbing McKinley in the years that followed, the companies that the NPS selected as permittees in December 1980 could count on a predictable clientele. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that four of these six companies remained as commercial guides on Mount McKinley for ten years or more.¹⁵⁶

These permits, however, pertained only to activities within the so-called "old park," and according to language in the newly-passed Alaska

National Interest Lands Conservation Act, there were no limits on the number of enterprises that could conduct mountaineering guiding activities on lands beyond the "old park" boundaries. At first, companies showed lukewarm interest in "new park" guiding activities, but by 1983 nine different firms were signed on as commercial use licensees. Only one of these (NOLS) was also serving as an "old park" guide.¹⁵⁷

The various Talkeetna flying services also began to be regulated at this time. When Congress passed ANILCA in 1980 and "old" Mount McKinley National Park tripled in size, Kahiltna Glacier and other popular landing areas were included in Denali National Park. Flying onto glaciers south of the Alaska Range was a well-established use by this time, and the only bureaucratic impact of the park's expansion was that the flying services using the park needed to obtain a NPS commercial use license (CUL), just as "new park" mountaineering guides did. For the first few years after ANILCA's passage, those who held CULs for air taxi and air tour services included Hudson Air Service, K2 Aviation, Talkeetna Air Taxi, and Lowell Thomas, Jr. During the early and mid-1980s, companies doing business in the park engaged primarily in pickup and dropoff services for Alaska Range mountaineers. By the late 1980s, however, flightseeing had become so popular that it was becoming a significant part of air tour companies' revenues. Some flightseeing companies offered visitors the opportunity to walk on an Alaska Range glacier, but many other tourist flights remained airborne outside of Talkeetna.¹⁵⁸

The National Park Service Kahiltna Glacier base camp is established each spring at the beginning of the climbing season. The camp provides support for independent and guided climbing expeditions during the main climbing season. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection



During this period, changes in the park guides were also being manifested on the north side of the Alaska Range. As noted above, horse-packer Berle Mercer had begun supplying mountaineers' expeditions beginning in the mid-1960s, and given the continued interest in north-side ascents, Mercer continued his service until 1981. Continuing in his stead was Dennis Kogl, a McKinley Park-based operator who had run commercial sled dog trips into the park since 1973 under the name Denali Dog Tours and Wilderness Freighters. Beginning in the winter of 1977-78, Kogl began to provide freight support to mountaineers who started their climbs on the north side of the Alaska Range. (See Chapter 8.) By 1982, he was considered an exclusive provider of dog sled transportation in the park.¹⁵⁹ Kogl continued operating his business until 1985; in more recent years, others have stepped in to provide similar services.¹⁶⁰

Climbing Management, 1979-1984

As noted above, the popularity of climbing dropped by more than 25 percent between 1976 (the popular bicentennial year) and 1977. Afterward, however, the numbers resumed their steady upward climb. By 1979 the number of McKinley summit attempts—533—was higher than it had been in 1976, and in 1983 more than 700 people registered to climb Mount McKinley.¹⁶¹ Not surprisingly, the weather for climbers was better in some years than in others, and perhaps for that reason, seasons that had a high degree of rescue activity, injuries, and deaths (1980 had eight deaths and 1981 had six, for example) alternated with years that had a relative lull in these areas.¹⁶² Years having a large number of rescues and

deaths, not surprisingly, brought on a spate of news articles. But every year brought the need for at least seven rescues, and the supposedly “safe” year of 1982, when there were no Mount McKinley climbing deaths, demanded sixteen. (See Figure 5.) Each year, therefore, brought forth editorials and letters to the editor calling for climbers to pay their own way by either posting a bond, obtaining insurance, or paying the NPS a fee.¹⁶³

During the late 1970s, climbers started pressuring NPS officials to once again relax the agency's decade-old regulations. As noted above, a park-specific regulation applied in 1970 called for all climbers to register before their ascent; to provide information on previous climbing experience; to submit physician's statements certifying the physical fitness of each mountaineer; to have each party carry a two-way radio; and to require a member of each party report to park headquarters after the climb.¹⁶⁴ But in the fall of 1979, the Alaskan Alpine Club began to lobby for fewer regulations. The NPS recognized that climbing was no longer an isolated activity. They also knew “that better and more sophisticated equipment, techniques, and clothing have reduced the need for regulated safety considerations.” Furthermore, as an NPS official later stated, “we could find no correlation between the requirements and who did or did not get in trouble on Mount McKinley.” In May 1980, therefore, it proposed to eliminate all park-specific regulations except for a pre-climb registration.¹⁶⁵ Both Anchorage newspapers protested; the *News* noted that “the government does have responsibility to ensure that parties embarking on expeditions in a National Park meet some standards,” while the more

conservative *Times* stated that “many taxpayers see stricter regulations as the key to reduced government costs.” But as the *Times* also noted, “climbers hope the regulations ... are on the way out. Rules beget rules, and soon their freedom is gone, they say.” It further noted that some climbers balked even at the minimal registration requirement, because “any sort of regimentation goes against the grain of those who are motivated to climb mountains.”¹⁶⁶ During the public comment period, several protested the relaxation of climbing regulation, and several also recommended requiring that “all climbers provide evidence of financial means or post a bond.” NPS authorities felt that the Talkeetna-based rangers provided a sufficient technical role, and that “charging individuals for public safety services” was too all-encompassing to be addressed in such a specific rule. The final rule was implemented, as proposed, on December 26, 1980.¹⁶⁷

During this period, rescue techniques were continuously modified and improved. In 1978, the military’s High Altitude Rescue Team—which had been founded in 1972 and was based at Elmendorf Air Force Base—began training on Mount McKinley. The following year it rescued a Japanese climber from Mt. McKinley’s 16,000-foot level, and the team continued its activities—from either Elmendorf or Fort Wainwright—for years afterward.¹⁶⁸

An equally important innovation was the commencement of a major health program. As a government report noted in late 1981,

The High Latitude Health Research Project of the University of Alaska Anchorage began what is hoped to be a several year medical research program on Mount McKinley this summer. ... a lengthy questionnaire ... was given to climbers as they returned from their climbs [which] dealt with such issues as type of equipment used, speed of ascent, weather conditions, and medical problems encountered. ... Although funding and logistical problems are not yet solved, the Project hopes to place teams of physicians on the mountain next year and in succeeding years. These teams will staff camps at the Kahiltna base camp and also at the 14,200 feet on the West Buttress during at least a major portion of the climbing season.¹⁶⁹

The following year, medical personnel were indeed stationed on the mountain. During most of May and June 1982, teams of doctors staffed the two above-named camps, and “though their primary mission was to conduct medical research, the doctors also assisted numerous climbers with minor to major medical problems.” The *Anchorage Times* lauded the teams, noting that “in at least two instances in 1982, lives were saved by doctors who were serving in these camps. ... [T]he stationing of a couple [of] physicians along the way seems like a good idea” and “should be considered for future seasons.”¹⁷⁰ The High Latitude Research Project (or Group) continued its valuable work



Dr. Peter Hackett’s medical research program, based at the 14,200-foot camp on Mt. McKinley, also provided medical assistance to climbers in distress. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

The first NPS ranger residence in Talkeetna was this mobile home, located just west of the railroad tracks. Roger Robinson Photo



in 1983—a government report that year stated that “this research team was surely instrumental in saving several lives, and their presence on the mountain will be sought in coming years.” A lack of funding after that season, however, forced the program’s discontinuance. Worried that “without the HLRG camp, climbers [would] have to again take the responsibility to caution themselves,” the NPS in 1984 set up a medical and rescue camp at the 14,200-foot level. Rangers established the camp that was operated by volunteer medical doctors and volunteer mountaineers. The camp proved “successful in reducing both the number and the costs of search and rescue incidents on Mt. McKinley.”¹⁷¹

The problems of garbage, which had been out of the news since the various University of Oregon climbs during the 1970s, re-emerged as an issue in 1983. An NPS overview outlined the problem in this way:

Over the last ten years, organizations and individuals in the climbing community along with the NPS have waged an intensive campaign to reduce the amount of litter on Mount McKinley. [W]e are satisfied that the mountaineers of today are climbing Mount McKinley with a much more sensitive ethic regarding litter and abandoned gear. But for the most part the question of human waste has not been dealt with. ... As the number of climbers keeps increasing, it becomes harder and harder to find

clean snow for cooking and drinking. So this year, the climbing rangers ... made a special point of urging all climbers to bag their human wastes and to dump the bags into deep crevasses [rather than burying them near often-used camps]. Plastic bags were provided by the NPS for those who needed them. [We] are confident that climbers in future years will be even more sensitive to the proper handling of human wastes.¹⁷²

In 1984, mountaineering rangers (according to their annual report) personally contacted “nearly all of the West Buttress climbers and emphasize[d] the importance of proper sanitation and trash removal practices.” And, for the first time, the agency required all climbers to deposit human waste into crevasses (and not in hastily-dug pit latrines, as had previously been the common practice). Those measures—backed by a citation and \$250 fine issued to one non-complying European party—“seems to have made a significant contribution toward cleaner campsites.”¹⁷³

The NPS established a slightly stronger presence in Talkeetna during this period. After two years of makeshift operations in the local fire hall, rangers—courtesy of owner Jim Sharp—moved to the Talkeetna Air Taxi hangar. Then, in April 1980, the NPS obtained a five-year lease on a 100' x 50' parcel just west of the Alaska Railroad tracks and just south of the old railroad depot.¹⁷⁴ Shortly afterward, NPS personnel moved a



East District Ranger Bob Gerhard directed the NPS mountaineering program from his post at park headquarters. Here, inside the trailer facility in 1983, he was preparing for a spring backcountry patrol. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

single-wide trailer from Fairbanks to the parcel, after which it was occupied by two seasonal rangers and a Student Conservation Association employee. Throughout this period, East District Ranger Robert Gerhard oversaw the park's mountaineering program. But in May 1984, Gerhard transferred to Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, and Robert Seibert, who moved to the area from Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, became the park's first South District Ranger (and the park's first year-round south-side employee).¹⁷⁵ During midsummer 1984, Seibert opened up the agency's first Talkeetna

office in a log cabin it leased near Main Street and just south of the Fairview Inn. The cabin was owned by Roberta Sheldon and was locally known as the Genet Building, because guide Ray Genet and his clients had constructed it during the late 1970s. Beginning in the spring of 1985, NPS personnel used the building for climbing orientations.¹⁷⁶

**New Regulations:
Their Context and Consequences, 1985-1995**

In 1983, as noted above, the number of Mount McKinley climbers topped 700 for the first time.



In 1984 the NPS leased a cabin to be used as a ranger contact station. Shown center, the log cabin was located in downtown Talkeetna and provided an opportunity to contact climbers going to or coming from Mt. McKinley. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

Recognizing the importance of improving foreign outreach, ranger Roger Robinson, in 1982, provided orientation to a Japanese climbing group at the 14,200-foot camp. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection



The mountain's popularity dropped modestly for the next two years (in 1985, 645 people tried to summit the peak) but they rose quickly for the next three years, and in 1989 more than a thousand people headed up Mount McKinley's slopes. And for the next several years the mountain remained popular, consistently attracting more than 900 climbers per year.¹⁷⁷

The great majority of those climbers got up and down the mountain safely and without incident. But in every year save one, one or more lives were lost on its slopes.¹⁷⁸ And every year both the NPS and the military were called on to conduct numerous rescue operations. The military absorbed (and did not detail) its annual rescue costs, but the NPS, which was more forthcoming, spent tens of thousands of dollars each year on Mount McKinley rescue operations. These costs, as in previous years, caused some taxpayers to conclude that because mountaineering (as noted in one news article) was "purely a self-centered recreation, with few practical social benefits," climbers should therefore have to pay their own rescue bills. Others, however, argued that rescues for mountaineers should be treated no differently than for boaters or recreational pilots; the cost of mountain rescues, in this context, paled by comparison. A May 1988 search for seven Gambell walrus hunters, for example, cost the Coast Guard and the Alaska Department of Public Safety more than \$1 million, and a May 1992 search for five fishermen lost in a Cessna near Yakutat cost the Air National Guard more than \$1.1 million.¹⁷⁹

Throughout this period, the NPS worked with others to maintain a camp at the 14,200-foot level of Mount McKinley. Funding for the High Latitude Research Project (also known as the Denali Medical Research Project) proved spotty—it operated in 1985 and again in 1988-89 before closing down—and the NPS did what it could to assist Dr. Peter Hackett in his work. Rangers occupied the site as well, during years when the research camp was both active and inactive, because their presence at the site allowed them "more reliably able to determine" if rescues were really needed. To assist rangers with their rescue work, the NPS in 1987 installed a rescue storage box at the 17,200-foot level.¹⁸⁰

Park Service rangers, during this period, recognized that foreigners accounted for a disproportionate number of search-and-rescue incidents. More specifically, foreign climbers in 1986 comprised about 25 percent of all climbers but 90 percent of search-and-rescue operations. To improve its foreign outreach—which until then had been limited to German and Japanese mountaineering brochures—agency staff prepared German, Japanese, and English-language slide/tape programs on climbing safety and ethics. And the following year, similar programs were made for French- and Spanish-speaking climbers. The NPS continued its outreach efforts through periodic updates of its foreign-language mountaineering brochures, both in the late 1980s and the mid-1990s. Rangers also carried on correspondence with foreign climbers' organizations, including groups in Korea. But after

several Koreans died on the mountain in 1992 (see below), the agency sent ranger J.D. Swed on a well-publicized nine-day trip to Korea, where he warned climbing groups about the mountain's difficulty and urged caution.¹⁸¹

After the disastrous years of 1980 and 1981, which recorded eight and six deaths respectively, the following decade witnessed two difficult years: 1986, with four deaths, and 1989, with six. None of these deaths produced more than incident-specific press coverage. In 1990 the NPS, working with Alan Ewert of the U.S. Forest Service, surveyed climbers on how Mount McKinley should be managed. What provoked the survey, however, was not the 1989 deaths but instead the thousand-plus climbers on the mountain that year, because the survey's purpose was "to determine users' perceptions of sanitation, trash and crowding issues." Bob Seibert, asked in 1990 about the survey's repercussions, stated that rangers might try to steer climbers away from the May-June peak season, and "eventually" the agency might need to institute a permit system on the mountain, particularly on the West Buttress route.¹⁸² The study's results, however, were surprising. Seibert stated that "although there is obvious room for improvement, the study showed that trash, sanitation and crowding are still within acceptable limits for most Mount McKinley users."¹⁸³

The public's attitude toward mountaineering safety changed abruptly in 1992 when eleven people died on the slopes of Mount McKinley. Among them were two Italians, a Swiss, three

Koreans, four Canadians, and one American guide: the well-respected mountaineer Terrance "Mugs" Stump. The large number of victims—three more than in any previous year—plus Stump's prominence among climbers provoked a major press reaction, with articles in both local newspapers and in major magazines such as *Newsweek* and the *Economist*.¹⁸⁴

In the inevitable postmortem that followed these deaths, commentators traced three to inexperience, with one article noting that "some have never even climbed before." Inasmuch as foreigners had accounted for more than 90 percent of recent deaths, South District ranger J.D. Swed stated that many felt they could "do" McKinley in a week and thus didn't bring the food and equipment needed to survive extended weather delays. But the other eight who died, like Stump, were well-equipped and experienced. One factor that did not play a role in the deaths was the combined rescue effort, which included 22 rescues. As the *Newsweek* writer noted, "The death toll could easily have doubled but for intrepid rescues by National Park rangers, who plucked two climbers from crevasses and evacuated half a dozen others."¹⁸⁵ The NPS that year spent some \$206,000 rescuing climbers and removing bodies from Mount McKinley, and the military expended an additional \$225,000. The lion's share of the NPS's expenses—about \$180,000—were fixed costs associated with having an Aerospatiale Lama high-altitude helicopter on standby at the Talkeetna airport.¹⁸⁶ The agency had first arranged for the helicopter—and had first borne the



Denali's first full-time South District Ranger, Robert Seibert, on the phone, coordinated the winter rescue of three missing Japanese climbers in 1989. Regional Public Information Officer, John Quinley, right, prepares for a media statement at the Talkeetna trailer. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection



A Lama high-altitude helicopter was first contracted in 1991 to stand by for administrative and rescue work in Denali National Park. That year a Korean climber with altitude illness was evacuated from the 14,200-foot camp and taken to the Kahiltna Glacier base camp for further transport. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

higher costs—during the 1991 climbing season. The move was necessary because the U.S. Army, due to Persian Gulf war commitments, was unable to supply a Chinook helicopter, as it had for more than a decade. After 1992, rescue costs remained high; in 1995, for example, the NPS spent \$126,000 and the military another \$292,000.¹⁸⁷

The 1993 climbing season proved a pleasant contrast to the events of the previous year. Just one person died, and only 14 needed to be rescued.¹⁸⁸ Officials in the new Clinton administration, however, felt that the \$190,000 spent on those rescues (and similarly high costs at other parks) was too high. On August 31, the NPS announced that it was working on a nationwide plan to have climbers and other adventure travelers pay their own way by requiring either a bond, fee, or rescue insurance. The plan would be tested during the spring of 1994 at two national parks: Mount Rainier in Washington and Denali in Alaska. If the plan proved successful other risk takers, such as kayakers and hang-gliders, might face similar charges in the other fifty national parks.¹⁸⁹ The new costs were justified by Assistant Interior Secretary Bonnie Cohen, who stated that

A basic level of public safety should clearly be provided by government,

but the increasing participation in high-risk recreation has pushed the cost of search and rescue to record levels. We want the Interior Department to be the leader in finding fair methods to provide for search and rescue capabilities in our parks without bankrupting other missions, such as resource protection and visitor service.

Cohen's boss, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, justified the new fees within a larger context; just as grazing fees were being raised and below-market timber sales were being phased out, the person who used the outdoors for sport might need to pay more. And given the fact that climbers paid an average \$4,249 for their expedition (according to an NPS estimate that year), the proposed fee was relatively modest. But climbers, not surprisingly, hated the idea; they protested that levying a fee on climbers (but not on hunters or private pilots) was unfair, and as one journalist noted, "most climbers would prefer the government simply get out of the rescue business and get rid of the standby helicopter."¹⁹⁰

In October 1993, NPS officials announced that they would delay the fees for a year; they admit-



This overview of the 17,200-foot camp shows the most extreme established camp on the West Buttress route of Mt. McKinley. The NPS attempts to maintain a ranger presence at this location to assist climbers suffering from the debilitating effects of altitude, cold and high winds. The trail leading out of camp climbs to Denali Pass, a section of the route with a high accident rate. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

ted at the time that specifics of the plan had not yet been worked out. But by early March 1994, Cohen had worked out the remaining details. Each climber, according to the plan, would be required to pay a \$200 fee. A month later, the NPS held a series of April public meetings; at those meetings, climbers told officials that they were just as dissatisfied with the plan as they had been the previous September. As a practical matter, however, the NPS needed the additional revenues; as climbing ranger J.D. Swed later remarked, “With increasing numbers of climbers and decreasing budgets, the NPS designed this program to share a portion of these costs with those who benefit directly from the service provided.”¹⁹¹

The NPS, over the next six months, reconsidered the matter and decided to reduce the proposed fee (that would apply to both Mt. McKinley and Mt. Foraker) from \$200 to \$150. Late that fall, when it became known that the fee would be imposed, the American Alpine Club threatened a lawsuit over the matter, noting that billing climbers without similar charges for backpackers, rafters, kayakers and others was clearly discriminatory. Despite that threat, the NPS issued a regulatory notice for its “new mountaineering

program” in mid-December 1994; it stated that the fee would be imposed for the 1995 climbing season.¹⁹² The fees were justified as follows:

The fee ... will help offset mountaineering administrative costs associated with prepositioning and maintaining the high-altitude ranger camp at 14,200 feet on the West Buttress route, mountaineering patrol salaries, education materials aimed at reducing the number of accidents, transportation and supplies. The cost of administering the international mountaineering program (climbers represented 23 countries in 1994) has increased over the past several years and consumes a disproportionate amount of the park budget.¹⁹³

The fees were imposed as scheduled, and the NPS collected \$159,925 from climbers that year, followed by approximate revenues of \$152,000 and \$159,000 in 1996 and 1997, respectively.¹⁹⁴

As part of its December 1994 notice, the NPS also included language requiring all climbers to register at least 60 days prior to their expeditions.¹⁹⁵

Guides work to prepare their clients for climbing Mt. McKinley by practicing skills such as crevasse rescue. Brian Okonek Photo



In an attempt to enforce this provision and make it effective for the 1995 climbing season, the agency issued an interim rule on the subject on March 31, 1995, just a few weeks before the climbing season began. The rule was to have become effective immediately. But because of the late issuance date for both the notice and the interim rule, many foreign climbers were unaware of the early-application deadline, and in response, the NPS waived the requirement for 1995. That September, the agency issued a proposed (permanent) rule regarding both the fee and the 60-day preregistration. No one responded during the public comment period, so in February 1996 the agency published a final rule, which became effective on March 25.¹⁹⁶ Rangers that year made a “lenient transition” toward both the fee imposition and the 60-day requirement; beginning in 1997 both rules were strictly enforced.¹⁹⁷

Between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s, modest changes were made in the regulation of the park’s guides. As noted above, the number of guides operating in the “old park” was limited beginning in the 1981 climbing season, and for more than a decade the NPS issued just seven mountaineering permits per year. Outside of the old park, the number of annual CULs issued to guiding companies was more fluid; between 1985 and 1995, the number of such companies was as high as fourteen or as low as two. During this period, guides led about 30 percent of Mount McKinley climbers.¹⁹⁸

Most guiding companies, in both the old and new parks, played by the rules and had no problem

obtaining their annual permits or licenses. But during the late 1980s, Genet Expeditions began to come under scrutiny. This company, as noted above, was one of six that had been awarded an Old Park concessions permit during the winter of 1980-81. The company, formerly based in Talkeetna, was purchased by Harry Johnson of Anchorage in 1983. Johnson, with little difficulty, renewed the company’s four-year permit during the winter of 1984-1985 and again during the winter of 1988-89.¹⁹⁹ In addition, the company received a CUL for New Park guiding beginning in 1985 and continuing for the remainder of the decade.²⁰⁰ By the early 1990s the company—which offered the services of such well-known climbers as Vern Tejas, Dave Staeheli, and John Michaud—was guiding 13 to 15 expeditions, with about 60 to 90 clients, each season. But both NPS rangers and rival guide services were criticizing the firm (according to one account) because of “its aggressive promotions and for being too gung-ho” about reaching McKinley’s summit. In 1988, a Genet client had died soon after summiting the peak, in part because her guide was inadequately prepared. The NPS, in response, gave the company an unsatisfactory rating that year. But the company allowed this “pattern of unsafe practices” to continue, and it received poor NPS evaluations in both 1989 and 1991. Given the company’s 1991 performance, the NPS revoked Genet’s concession permit in January 1992, effective immediately.

Johnson, Genet’s leader, appealed the revocation, calling it “arbitrary, subjective and unsubstantiated.”²⁰¹ But in mid-March, NPS Director

In 1985, the pit toilet at the 14,200-foot camp on the West Buttress of Mt. McKinley provided quite a spectacular view. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection



James Ridenour denied the appeal and noted that his decision was “the final administrative decision in this matter.” A month later, the firm filed suit against the NPS in district court over its 1991 NPS evaluation. In early May, Judge James Singleton ruled that while the NPS may have treated the company unfairly, the “ultrahazardous” activity in question gave the agency the authority to rule against guides in order to protect climber safety.²⁰² Later that year another judicial decision reinstated the company’s permit, but it was a Pyrrhic victory inasmuch as the permit was set to expire in December 1992.²⁰³

Late in 1992, NPS officials advertised for a seventh permittee and chose Alpine Ascents International (AAI), operated by Todd Burleson of Woodinville, Washington. AAI was awarded the permit in 1993. But because this award was not in time for the year’s climbing season, the practical effect of the NPS’s award was that the park had six active mountaineering permittees in 1992 and 1993 but seven permittees in 1994.²⁰⁴

In mid-November 1993, not long after the AAI received its permit, Bob Jacobs—who owned a company that had not been chosen—filed suit against the NPS, because he believed that the selection process had been unfair. In mid-June 1994, District Court Judge John Sedwick ruled on the matter. He stated that the NPS’s selection had been “arbitrary” and “capricious.” In a surprising twist, however, he voided AAI’s permit because Burleson—apparently unbeknownst to NPS authorities—had been an illegal guide on Mount McKinley in June 1992, just before he had

applied for the concessions permit. Sedwick, therefore, stated that “the award to AAI must be sent back to the Park Service for further consideration.”²⁰⁵ In July 1994, Sedwick gave the NPS three options on how to proceed, one of which stated that the agency could “proceed for the time-being with one fewer concessioner.” The NPS, in response, decided to not advertise for a replacement. Since that time, just six companies have guided clients up Mount McKinley and Mount Foraker.²⁰⁶

Burleson, it turned out, was not the only illegal guide on the mountain during this period. One guide was cited for illegal guiding in 1991, and in 1993 “several” miscreants were on the mountain, two of which were cited and fined a total of \$9,100. A year later the NPS cited Rainer Bolesch, who was leading a group of 14 clients up the mountain, and deported him back to Germany, and that same year, Wayne Mushrush—a former Genet guide—was arrested for illegally guiding two Georgia men up the mountain. The men, moreover, were only part of a larger problem; as ranger J.D. Swed noted, “We’ve got a couple [of other people] that we’re pretty convinced are guiding, and a couple we’re not sure.” Swed and other NPS officials were well aware that “bandit guides” had been operating on the mountain for years—perhaps as early as the mid-1980s—but 1994 was the first time in several years that the agency decided to crack down on the practice.²⁰⁷

Given the ever-increasing parade of climbers up McKinley each spring, the management of

In 1991 the suggested treatment for human waste was to bag it in biodegradable plastic bags and deposit it in a deep crevasse. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Photo



garbage—both trash and human waste—was a continuing problem area. Before the 1980s, the only latrine on the mountain was at the Kahiltna base camp; it had been installed in 1977. But between 1982 and 1989, managers demanded the installation of latrines at the 14,200-foot camp, in the Sheldon Amphitheater, and at the 17,200-foot level.²⁰⁸ A report by climbing ranger Bob Seibert in 1989 warned that it was “more important than ever for mountaineers to properly dispose of their human waste to prevent the contamination of snow. ... When moving camp, tie the bags off and toss into a deep crevasse. The use of biodegradable plastic bags is recommended.” And regarding rubbish disposal, he wrote that “many expeditions are hauling their trash to base camp where it is flown off the mountain. Still others continue to crevasse their trash. ... Mountaineers of all nationalities must take the responsibility for, and the initiative in, preserving the quality of the world’s mountain environments. A combination of education, leading by example, and peer pressure are probably the most effective tools. ...” Seibert, in another article, noted that foreigners appeared particularly negligent about packing out their garbage because they had traditionally littered and abandoned their gear during expeditions.²⁰⁹ His advice, repeated in later years, apparently worked; by July 1991, he was able to state that the mountain was cleaner than at any time in its recent history. In order to effectively manage the problem, his successor J.D. Swed experimented in 1993 with the removal of human waste in barrels by helicopter from the various mountain camps. (The NPS also issued citations for littering in both of those years.) In

1995, Swed dispatched two rangers to the Kahiltna base camp area for trash removal, human waste cleanup, and crevasse-marking duties. Rangers continued these duties in the years that followed.²¹⁰

As noted above, NPS Talkeetna-based rangers during the mid-1980s lived in a mobile home near the town’s railroad depot, and they worked at the rustic Genet Building, just south of Main Street near the Fairview Inn. Shortly after the NPS occupied this new office, tourists began visiting the facility. To cater to their interests the agency installed an interpretive kiosk just outside the building, and an Alaska Natural History Association outlet opened there, operated by a seasonal staff person. In 1990, the NPS replaced the trailer with a new two-storey residence, which was now on land owned by the state-owned Alaska Railroad. (See Chapter 9.) After it was completed, it served as a district ranger’s office as well as a seasonal rangers’ residence. The agency, by 1984, also added a rescue cache, in a Conex trailer, which was located on a separate parcel just north of the ranger residence.²¹¹

Seibert continued serving as the South District Ranger until the fall of 1991, when J.D. Swed replaced him. An administrative assistant was added to the agency’s workforce soon afterward. In 1995, two rangers were added to establish a greater presence at the Kahiltna base camp for the various cleanup duties noted above; each year since then, a ranger has spent most of each climbing season at the Kahiltna base camp engaged in a variety of duties.²¹² The NPS,

NPS rangers experimented with different methods of managing human waste on Mt. McKinley. Roger Robinson, in 2000, loaded a commercial river toilet tank onto the first fixed-wing flight commissioned by the NPS to transport human waste from the Kahiltna Glacier base camp to Talkeetna. This flight carried three tanks, holding the accumulated human waste from a 3-week ranger patrol on Mt. McKinley, demonstrating the feasibility of removing human waste from the mountain. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection



during this period, considerably beefed up its staff; whereas the agency's only presence in 1984 was the South District Ranger along with three seasonal mountaineering rangers and a Student Conservation Association (SCA) employee, and civilian mountain-patrol volunteers, new permanent personnel were added in 1990. By 1995 the agency had a district ranger, five mountaineering rangers, a four-person seasonal helicopter crew, an administrative technician, three fee collectors, an SCA employee, and more than 30 mountaineering volunteers from both the civilian and military ranks.²¹³

Recent Trends:

Rescue, Access, and Waste Management

The popularity of Alaska Range mountaineering soared during the 1970s and 1980s; the number of people each year attempting to climb Mount McKinley, for example, shot up more than 400 percent during the 1970s (from 124 in 1970 to 659 in 1980), and during the 1980s it increased another 50 percent or more (from 659 to 998 in 1990). Between 1990 and 1995 it climbed another 22 percent, to 1,220 climbers. Since 1995 the annual number of climbers has stabilized; it has ranged from 1,110 (in 1997) up to 1,340 (in 2005), with an average figure of about 1,210 climbers per year.²¹⁴

Beginning in 1995, mountaineers attempting to climb either Mt. McKinley or Mt. Foraker were required to pay a \$150 fee to offset the costs of the park's mountaineering program. This fee, as specifically described in the December 1994 regulation, did not include rescue costs. Histori-

cally, the costs of rescues—to the NPS, to the State of Alaska, and to military authorities—had been largely dependent on the number of rescues performed and had typically totaled \$10,000 to \$50,000 per year. (See Figure 5.) But beginning in 1991, substantial new fixed costs had been added because the NPS had a contract to station a high-altitude Lama helicopter at Talkeetna during the three-month climbing season. The costs of helicopter rental was \$160,000 or more each year, to which were added incident-specific rescue costs (for the NPS) plus additional costs to the State of Alaska and the military. Because the cost of Alaska Range mountaineering rescues was a relatively small part of all Alaska rescue costs, it was widely recognized that the money spent on rescues—regardless of their cause—was a valid public expense.

An incident in June 1998, however, caused officials to reconsider the status quo. A party of six British climbers on Mount McKinley disregarded warnings and advice from park rangers; injured and sick, the six climbers had to be rescued by helicopter from the 19,000-foot level, and the cost of that rescue totaled \$221,818.²¹⁵ This widely-publicized incident, which resulted in Denali's highest-ever rescue bill, caused Sen. Frank Murkowski, who chaired the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, to take another look at rescue costs.²¹⁶ As a Senate report noted,

As the mountaineering program at Denali [about \$742,000] accounts for almost one-third of the total cost of

The Talkeetna ranger trailer was replaced in 1990 by a new 5-bedroom residence on the same site. Tom Habecker Collection



the annual search and rescue activities for the entire National Park System, some have questioned whether such expenditures for a very small and select group of park users is appropriate, and whether some sort of reimbursement for the cost of rescues should be collected.²¹⁷

To find out more, Murkowski came to Anchorage in late August 1998 and held a committee hearing at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art. At that hearing were various NPS representa-

tives along with mountaineering guides, air taxi operators, and military officers in charge of search and rescue operations. At that hearing, it was recognized that the cost of McKinley rescue operations—both civilian and military—totaled roughly \$1 million per year. Murkowski, looking for ways to recoup some of those costs, asked the various witnesses if it was time to start requiring climbers to have insurance, post a bond, or pay a higher fee.²¹⁸

No consistent recommendations emerged from that hearing, so Murkowski sought counsel from

By 1995 the Talkeetna Ranger Station staff had grown considerably. Front row, left to right, are Joe Reichert, helicopter mechanic Stan Bridges with his wife and baby, and Daryl Miller; middle row, Miriam Valentine, 'Punky' Moore, Grete Perkins, Elaine Sutton, SCA Elena Hinds; and back row, Kevin Moore, Dave Kreutzer, South District Ranger J. D. Swed, Eric Martin, Helicopter Pilot Doug Drury, and Roger Robinson. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection





On a typical afternoon in May 2001, one would see groups of climbers at the top of the headwall on the West Buttress route. The safety concerns about congestion in this area have contributed to an annual limit of 1500 climbers on Mt. McKinley. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

the Interior Department staff. On October 15, 1998, in the closing days of the 105th Congress, he introduced a bill calling for the Interior Secretary to “submit a report on the feasibility and desirability of recovering the costs of high altitude lifesaving missions on Mount McKinley in Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska.” The primary cost-recovery methods to be considered in the report would be either “proof of insurance or a bond that is sufficient to pay the costs of a rescue” or “proof of health insurance that is sufficient to pay medical and hospital costs of treatment for injuries that may reasonably be anticipated to be sustained on a climb.”²¹⁹

The following March, Senator Murkowski submitted a new bill for the 106th Congress to consider. Slightly modified from the previous bill, it dropped previous language specifying a discussion of insurance or a bond. Instead, it had three provisions: to “report on the suitability and feasibility of recovering the costs of high altitude rescues on Mt. McKinley,” to comment on the need for proof of medical insurance, and to “review the amount of fees charged for a climbing permit and make such recommendations for changing the fee structure as the Secretary deems appropriate.”²²⁰ Murkowski held a May 13 hearing on the bill; at that hearing, Interior Department

official Stephen C. Saunders approved two of the bill’s provisions, but urged the removal of the medical-insurance provision because “this is an issue between the private citizen, his family and his doctors,” not the federal government. Despite his testimony, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee unanimously passed the original bill, which on June 9 was reported to the full Senate. On November 19, 1999 the full Senate passed it—still unamended—by unanimous consent. Action then moved on to the House of Representatives, where it was hurriedly passed on October 24, 2000, in the waning days of the 106th Congress. President Clinton signed the bill on November 9.²²¹

The bill stated that the Interior Department would have a report back to Congress on the matter within nine months of the bill’s passage. In response, the NPS detailed Mount Rainier’s lead mountaineering ranger, Mike Gauthier, to complete a mountain climber rescue cost recovery study. Gauthier worked with a variety of NPS staff as well as the American Alpine Club on the report, and he also gathered public comment from a wide variety of agencies and private organizations. The NPS completed the report, as required by Congress, in August 2001, and the Interior Department issued the final



In 1987, summer tourists, as well as climbers, were greeted at the log cabin ranger station in Talkeetna. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

report in early 2002.²²² The agency responded to the report's three provisions as follows: 1) it recommended "that the current policy of not charging for search and rescue be continued," 2) it recommended "not requiring proof of medical insurance at this time," and 3) it stated that "an additional \$50.00 fee should be added to the current \$150.00 registration fee" and that all climbers in the park and preserve—not just those on Mount McKinley and Mount Foraker—should be required to register.²²³ The NPS made no immediate moves to raise fees or institute other regulations; it did, however, note that additional climbing fees could be expected in the not-too-distant future. Thus it was not particularly surprising when, in 2005, fees were raised from \$150 to \$200 per climber.²²⁴

Parkwide planning efforts also began to impact Alaska Range mountaineers during this time. The park's 1983-86 general management plan, for example, made no attempt to regulate southside activities (instead, it encouraged greater use by both mountaineers and fly-in visitors), and the 1993-97 South Side (South Slope) Development Concept Plan similarly avoided any management actions related to mountaineering and glacier access.²²⁵ But during the 1997 climbing season, park managers recognized (see Chapter 10) that some regulation needed to be applied to the various air taxi and flightseeing tour operators that shuttled between Talkeetna and various glacier airstrips. They decided, therefore, to issue concessions permits rather than incidental business permits to the eight existing firms that carried on that

trade. Eight of these five-year permits were issued in 1997 and early 1998. The agency's action did not limit the total number of flights to and from the park's glaciers; it did, however, limit the number of companies that could continue these flights.²²⁶ Due to mergers and attrition, the number of active air-taxi and flightseeing services in 2006 was just half that of 1998; in early 2007, the NPS issued ten-year permits to these four carriers.²²⁷

Recognizing the problems associated with long-term growth in backcountry visitation—and more specifically in the number of climbers, snowmachiners, flightseeing tourists and air taxi patrons—park management in 1999 began to prepare a backcountry management plan. (Superintendent Steve Martin, who spearheaded the effort, candidly noted that "It isn't that we have a lot of problems right now, but we need to plan ahead to know where we're going.") Preparing the draft plan, as noted in Chapter 10, was subject to several delays, but by February 2003 park staff had completed and released the park's *Backcountry Management Plan, General Management Plan, [and] Environmental Statement*. As Superintendent Paul Anderson (Martin's replacement) noted somewhat later, the plan's purpose was to "describe the future for glacier landings, air taxi operators, the number of climbers on Mount McKinley and managing snowmachining in the park additions."²²⁸

The draft plan recognized the increased importance in several ways. All of the four action

Summer visitors have the option of flightseeing in the Alaska Range, and can also experience landing on a glacier. Tourism has grown in numbers and variety of opportunities. NPS Photo



alternatives, for example, delineated the Kahiltna Glacier-West Buttress route up Mount McKinley as a 9,907-acre “mountaineering special use area” which allowed for “established climbing routes and administrative camps.” (The intended “overall character” in that area “feels like a series of established wilderness camps connected by a trail – remote in location yet very social with many signs of human presence.”) Visitors to that area might “encounter up to 200 climbers per day” between April and July.²²⁹ Aircraft noise, even at the highest elevations, was also a concern.²³⁰ In addition, all alternatives incorporated a series of “portal areas” and “climbing and mountaineering study areas” to encompass other popular glacier landing sites and climbing routes. The plan identified ten small portal areas, where relatively high use levels and interaction levels were anticipated; these areas were located within five larger-sized mountaineering study areas, where use levels—though lower than in portal areas—would be higher than in the surrounding countryside.²³¹

Alternative D, the NPS’s preferred alternative, stated that the agency would limit to 1,500 the number of annual permits it issued to Mount McKinley climbers. This limit was a compromise between a 1,300-permit limit (as recommended in alternatives B and C) and Alternative E, which set no annual limits. The plan made no limitations on where air taxi landings could take place in the New Park. Regarding scenic tour (i.e., flightseeing) landings, the alternative

stated that at three of the ten portal areas—Ruth Amphitheater, Kahiltna Base Camp, and Pika Glacier (in Little Switzerland)—the NPS “would allow higher levels of scenic tour use than would be true of the surrounding management area,” and at Kahiltna Base Camp, there would be no limitation on the number of scenic landings. Scenic tour landings would also be allowed in many other areas south of the Alaska Range, though the NPS would work with flight services on “contract provisions to achieve desired resource conditions.”²³²

As noted in Chapter 10, NPS officials spoke with various major user groups about their opposition to the draft plan, some of whom represented mountaineering-related interests. Point-to-point air taxi operators were able to move from a series of prescriptive actions (as stated in the draft plan) to a series of desired conditions. And scenic air tour operators, who had grumbled that the NPS was on the verge of setting up a quota system, were able to work out a system in which their activities were governed by encounter rates and activity levels rather than simple volume. A final area of contention dealt with climbing. Here, language in the draft remained; American Alpine Club leaders, despite initial protests, came to recognize that an annual limit of 1,500 climbers made sense.²³³

In April 2005, the agency released a revised draft of its backcountry management plan. This plan, consistent with the draft, had a 9,907-acre West



This 2007 photo shows the Kahiltna Glacier base camp as a busy airport, with aircraft arriving and departing and climbers waiting for flights. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

Buttress Special Use area that provided a “seasonal route to the summit of Mount McKinley that can accommodate large numbers of climbers during the primary climbing season.” The revised plan retained a 1,500-climber annual limit for Mount McKinley. As to air access, it stated that the agency “would impose new registration requirements only in areas where use levels are sufficient enough that user conflicts and/or resource damage are occurring” or were likely to occur. The plan, moreover, stated that “it is likely that overnight use and winter day use from the Kahiltna Glacier east would meet these criteria in the near future.” Air taxi landings would be allowed throughout the New Park, but scenic air tour landings would be allowed in all of the portal areas that had been identified in the draft plan. Landings would not be restricted at the Kahiltna Base Camp, but only if landings took place before July 1. Finally, the plan beefed up its wilderness management recommendations by adding a detailed climbers’ guidance on the use of fixed and removable anchors.²³⁴

The final backcountry management plan, which was issued in January 2006 and became effective in mid-March, was virtually identical to the revised draft as it pertained to mountaineering and Alaska Range aircraft access.²³⁵ The approval of that plan had few immediate impacts. Later that year, the NPS announced that beginning in 2007, it would begin enforcing the 1,500-climber limit on Mount McKinley. This was not expected to have any short-term implications, however,

inasmuch as the annual number of climbers had stabilized in recent years and had not yet exceeded 1,350.²³⁶ Another by-product of the plan’s passage was that glacier tour operators’ flights would be limited to a 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. window and that landings would be allowed only in previously-popular areas. The NPS, however, spent considerable time with the Talkeetna air services on these changes, the results being that the limits merely codified standard business practices.²³⁷

The problem of trash and human waste, which had been a focus of NPS concern since the 1970s, has been attacked in new and innovative ways in recent years. As noted above, NPS rangers during the 1980s responded to the growing number of climbers (and what they left behind) by instituting a formal orientation to climbers at the agency’s Talkeetna Ranger Station; by providing booklets in several languages encouraging a “pack it in-pack it out” philosophy; by installing pit toilets on the mountain (in 1982 one had been installed at the 14,200-foot camp, plus another in 1989 at the 17,200-foot level, to supplement the 1977 facility at the Kahiltna base camp); and by levying littering citations. By the late 1980s, mountaineering rangers were asking climbers to haul their trash back to base camp, and they were asking climbers to deposit human waste in biodegradable plastic bags and discard them “into a deep crevasse.” Given these measures, climbing ranger Bob Seibert stated in 1991 that the mountain was cleaner than at any time in its recent history.



A common sight on the West Buttress route in recent years, this line of climbers is ascending the steepest, most difficult section of the West Buttress headwall between 15,500 feet and 16,200 feet. The fixed ropes are now managed by the National Park Service for use by all. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

But the ongoing crush of climbers—more than a thousand per year, the great majority of them along the concentrated West Buttress route—demanded additional measures to fully address the problem. In 1995—thanks to the fee-based revenue—new versions of the park’s mountaineering brochures (last produced in the late 1980s) became available in Korean, Italian, and Russian as well as German, French, Spanish, Japanese, and English.²³⁸ Those booklets, produced by the Alaska Natural History Association, asked climbers to carry all litter and garbage off the mountain, to leave no permanent food or supply caches, to carefully protect temporary food caches (primarily from damage caused by ravens), and to remove all privately-installed fixed climbing lines.²³⁹

Most climbers, in response to the new booklets, took the anti-littering message to heart. But some—particularly foreigners—paid scant attention to it, and rangers in 1995 reported that “trash, left by inconsiderate climbers, is found along the West Buttress route especially on the lower glacier. ... It is mandatory to pack out all trash, extra food and fuel.” This trash buildup forced rangers, in 1996, to remove some 2,000 pounds of debris from the lower Kahiltna, and

in 1997, one mountaineering patrol cleaned up more than 700 pounds of garbage from the 14,200-foot camp alone. Recognizing that much of the generated trash consisted of one-gallon fuel cans, a Prescott College student named Eric Remza looked into the problem during the summer of 1998 and discovered that almost one-third of all expeditions left at least one fuel can on the mountain. NPS rangers, in response, initiated a mandatory fuel-can return system in 1999, and more than 90 percent of those surveyed complied with the new rule.²⁴⁰

Encouraged by these results, and hoping to do much more, Denali rangers in 2000 initiated a comprehensive trash and human waste management program. To each climber, they distributed blue plastic bags (to be used for garbage) and clear plastic bags (to be used for human waste). In order to monitor climbers’ garbage, rangers weighed climbers’ food at the beginning of each ascent and then weighed the climbers’ trash and remaining food upon their return. Rangers quickly discovered (according to their annual report) that “trash return rates improved simply because of the increased attention” paid climbers by NPS staff. “Rangers reported a significant decrease in garbage found in the popular camps,” it



Lead Mountaineering Ranger Roger Robinson holds a Clean Mountain Can, the second model produced, in 2002. This particular CMC had been dropped by accident from the West Buttress headwall and had fallen and rolled over 2000 feet, surviving without damage, proving the durability of this newly-invented container. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

noted, “and Denali appeared to be much cleaner than in years past.” The following year, this process was applied more broadly, both to trash and to fuel cans. The data collected in 2001, in turn, gave rangers the information they needed so that future expeditions could package their food in order to minimize waste.²⁴¹ Rangers, in later years, continued to require that climbers haul all of their garbage back to the Kahiltna base camp, and after the 2003 season, they noted that they “generally had very good compliance.”²⁴²

As to human waste, most climbers in 2000 were asked to use clear plastic bags, which could be “slotted” into crevasses. That same year,

however, mountaineering ranger Roger Robinson implemented a new idea: the use of plastic, rectangular containers that could serve as a portable toilet. These boxes were already in use for river travelers, and to test the concept on the mountain, he asked four staff volunteers to try it out during a 20-day patrol. He discovered that the system, while not perfect, was feasible for more large-scale use.²⁴³ During the following winter, Robinson worked with a manufacturer on an improved concept, and together they worked out the lighter, smaller, and cylindrical Clean Mountain Can (CMC). With a \$2,400 grant from the American Alpine Club, 50 prototype canisters were produced, which was sufficient to supply



Joe Reichert (right) provides Clean Mountain Cans to climbers at the 14,200-foot camp. NPS Photo, Roger Robinson Collection

21 expeditions during the 2001 climbing season. Most of these groups headed up the West Buttress, and a few took CMCs all the way up to the 17,200-foot “high camp.” The response from users that year was generally positive; as Robinson noted, “There’s no question it’s a doable thing.” The cans, he stated, were “the way of the future.”²⁴⁴

Robinson recognized that the 17,200-foot “high camp” was one of the most heavily-impacted human waste areas on the mountain, even though a latrine had been located there since 1989, and climbers knew that the site was “exceptionally filthy.” To prevent further deterioration at the camp, he required all climbers using the camp for a 20-day period during 2002 to use a CMC.²⁴⁵ In order to implement the new requirement, the NPS purchased 220 of these cylinders and distributed 150 of them at the rangers’ 14,200-foot camp during a 30-day trial period. It proved so popular that in 2003, almost every climber who visited “high camp” brought along a CMC, and the idea also gained wide support from several of the commercial guiding firms. By the end of the 2003 season, Robinson was able to report that “at the 17,200-foot high camp, the human impact on this desolate location has significantly improved. ... the trash has been eliminated and ... almost all human waste is carried off.” Indeed, the high camp latrine was itself hauled away that year.²⁴⁶

Emboldened by the success of the program thus far, the NPS rangers decided to purchase hundreds of new CMCs and distribute them during

the 2004 climbing season to all climbers at either the Kahiltna base camp (for West Buttress climbers) or Talkeetna (for those attempting other Alaska Range climbs). The experiment proved less than successful, however, because some West Buttress climbers cached their CMC during their ascents. Rangers, as a result, decided to go back to their earlier pattern of distributing them at the 14,200-foot camp to ensure their use on Mount McKinley’s higher slopes.²⁴⁷

In 2006, NPS rangers started distributing CMCs in Talkeetna as part of the check-in process; since that time, climbers have been asked to keep the cans throughout their trek and return them to Talkeetna afterward. The park’s backcountry management plan, which was approved in February of that year, stated that climbers would be required to use CMCs for all human waste above 14,200 feet elevation on the West Buttress route and within one-half mile of air taxi landing sites. A compendium entry issued in 2007 was even more comprehensive. It required that West Buttress route climbers deposit all waste in a container; below the 15,000-foot level, waste could be bagged and tossed into a crevasse, but above that elevation, CMCs were necessary for all human waste.²⁴⁸

These two major efforts—to eliminate litter and human waste—were remarkably successful in cleaning up Mount McKinley, particularly the West Buttress route, and a number of longtime climbers provided testimonials to how clean the route was in comparison to climbs during the 1970s and 1980s. Rangers were only too aware,

however, that some climbers still did not seem to be environmentally aware. (Robinson, in 2003, noted that “some climbers still pollute—although those caught are fined 100 dollars.”) Sanitation and garbage would always be a concern because, according to Robinson, “if the Park Service wasn’t there to police people, they’d go back to their old ways.” And, indeed, experience in recent years has underscored the fact that many mountaineers—perhaps due to their sheer exhaustion from climbing—are unlikely to keep high-altitude camps clean without the prodding of either a guide or ranger.⁴⁴⁹

Finally, recent years have also witnessed the establishment of a fully functional facility which integrated the needs of Alaska Range climbers, the park’s south side visitors, and park staff. As noted above, Talkeetna-based NPS rangers had lived in ad hoc, temporary quarters until 1983 when it was able to lease Ray Genet’s log cabin; rangers moved into the facility in 1984 and began using the site for both mountaineering orientation and visitor contacts in the spring of 1985. The cabin, however, was “definitely Alaskan” and substandard; it was heated with a woodstove and had neither plumbing nor an outhouse. Rangers, during this period, lived in a single-wide trailer near the Alaska Railroad tracks. But during the late 1980s, NPS officials recognized the need for more substantial facilities. In 1990, the agency built a new, two-storey residence on its parcel near the railroad, and when completed, it served as the district ranger’s office as well as a residence. Meanwhile, the agency was also moving to secure a more substantial facility to

replace the Genet cabin. In fiscal year 1989, the NPS allotted funds for purchasing a site for a future Talkeetna “visitor contact center.” Interest initially focused on purchasing and improving the property containing the Genet cabin.²⁵⁰ But in June 1990, Talkeetna resident Phillip Wallona told NPS officials of his interest in selling a 22,500-square-foot (0.48-acre) three-lot tract at the northeast corner of First Avenue and B Street. In December 1990, joint owners Phillip and Judy Wallona accepted the Park Service’s \$74,500 offer to purchase the property, and the formal property transfer took place on August 16, 1991.²⁵¹

During the period that the Wallonas and the NPS agreed to terms, planners in the agency’s Denver Service Center were working on a document that might have brought a much larger visitor facility to the Talkeetna area. As noted in Chapter 9, planners issued a preliminary version of the so-called South Slope Development Concept Plan in late 1990; that plan, among its other provisions, envisioned a visitor center either in Talkeetna or within Denali State Park. Then, in March 1991, planners completed a draft environmental assessment that proposed a \$15 million, 14,000-square-foot visitor center on a bluff about a mile south of Talkeetna. Many local residents were opposed to the visitor center; more than 500, in fact, signed a petition asking the agency to place the facility elsewhere. In February 1992, the NPS issued an “alternatives workbook” for the plan. That workbook offered four alternatives, one of which recommended a Talkeetna-area visitor center.²⁵²



The new Talkeetna Ranger Station opened in the spring of 1997. It provides offices for the Talkeetna NPS staff, areas for mountaineer orientation and visitor contacts, and a base for search and rescue operations. NPS Photo



First hired by the NPS as a permanent mountaineering ranger in June 1991, Daryl Miller became the South District Lead Mountaineering Ranger in 1997, in charge of all mountain operations. Daryl, pictured here on the West Buttress of Mt. McKinley in 1998, became the South District Ranger in 2000. Daryl Miller Collection

Despite continued opposition, the NPS in May 1993 released its draft South Slope Development Concept Plan. The agency's proposed action called for the immediate construction of a 10,000-square-foot visitor center elsewhere combined with the possible future construction of a 16,000-square-foot visitor center near Talkeetna, "but only if the need for a south slope hotel/recreational complex there was clearly established."²⁵³ Of those opposed to the plan, those most vehement were Talkeetna-area residents, who loudly denounced any plan that included a visitor center or hotel in their midst. So strong was their opposition that park superintendent Russ Berry agreed to proceed no further with the south slope planning process, and serious discussion of a major Talkeetna facility evaporated soon afterward.²⁵⁴ The ongoing visitor center proposals made Talkeetna residents understandably wary of the NPS's intentions, and in response the agency assured residents that the proposed facility at the west end of the Talkeetna townsite would be a mountaineering center and not a general-purpose visitor center.

Throughout this period, the NPS tried to secure construction funding for the center. In 1993, Superintendent Berry glumly reported that "construction of the mountaineering contact station ... fell behind schedule [this year] and must be now readied for 1995." Meanwhile, design work was well underway by early 1994, and in 1995 the NPS awarded a contract to Wolverine Supply, Inc. of Wasilla. Construction began later that year.²⁵⁵ Thanks to the efforts of NPS architect

Brad Richie, the "spacious and functional new building" was completed in December 1996 (see Chapter 11). The following spring, the center opened its doors to both climbers and the public, and on June 6, Bradford and Barbara Washburn brought a crowd to the center to help celebrate the 50th anniversary of Ms. Washburn's Mount McKinley conquest as part of "Operation White Tower."²⁵⁶

The Talkeetna Mountaineering Center, known more informally as the Talkeetna Ranger Station, quickly became popular with both mountaineers and other tourists, and before long the NPS recognized the need for an adjacent parking area. In 2002, it had the opportunity to purchase property just north of the Wallonas' original parcel. James and Susan Kellard offered the NPS an 8,750 square foot (0.20-acre) tract that encompassed portions of three town lots. That September, the NPS purchased the unimproved tract for \$66,000.²⁵⁷

Since 1995, the park's mountaineering staff has gradually increased in number. In 1995, as noted above, South District Ranger J.D. Swed led a crew of five mountaineering rangers, a four-person seasonal helicopter crew, an administrative technician, three fee collectors, a Student Conservation Association employee, and more than 30 volunteers. In 2000, Swed left Denali for a park unit in Indiana. Soon afterward he was replaced by Daryl Miller, who had served as a mountaineering ranger at the park since 1991; and Roger Robinson, who had first worked as a

mountaineering ranger in 1980, became the Lead Mountaineering Ranger. Since the mid-1990s the district's mission has broadened considerably, and in 2006 the Talkeetna-based staff included Miller, Robinson, eight mountaineering rangers (about half of them permanent employees), a four-person helicopter crew, three visitor use assistants, an interpretive ranger, a park planner, a janitor, and almost 40 mountaineering volunteers.²⁵⁸

- ¹ Tom Walker, *Kantishna: Miners, Musers, and Mountaineers* (Missoula, Pictorial Histories, 2005), 6-14.
- ² These two geographical features were unnamed at the time but were later named for members of this party.
- ³ Walker, *Kantishna*, 161-78.
- ⁴ 64th Congress, 1st Session, *Senate Report No. 440*, May 15, 1916, *Congressional Record* 64 (February 19, 1917), 3630.
- ⁵ See, for example, NPS, "Superintendent's Monthly Report" for Mount McKinley National Park, June 1923, 2-3.
- ⁶ William E. Brown, *A History of the Denali-Mount McKinley Region, Alaska* (Santa Fe, NPS, 1991), 174-76.
- ⁷ SAR, April 1932, 3; May 1932, 1, 3; Grant H. Pearson with Philip Newill, *My Life of High Adventure*, 125-28, 150-58.
- ⁸ R.A. Mewaldt, "Cosmic Rays," in <http://www.srl.caltech.edu/personnel/dick/cos-encyc.html>; "What Are Cosmic Rays?," in <http://www.ast.leeds.ac.uk/haverah/cosrays.shtml>; "Victor F. Hess," in http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/physics/laureates/1936/hess-bio.html; Eric William Grashorn, *A Search for a Cosmic Ray Point Source with the MINOS Far Detector* (unpublished M.S. thesis), University of Minnesota, August 2005; Germaine Beiser and Arthur Beiser, *The Story of Cosmic Rays* (New York, E. P. Dutton, 1962), 21-23.
- ⁹ "The History of Cosmic Ray Studies, 1900-1949," in http://helios.gsfc.nasa.gov/hist_1900.html; Michael Sfraga, *Bradford Washburn, a Life of Exploration* (Corvallis, Oregon State Univ. Press, 2004), 155.
- ¹⁰ Beiser and Beiser, *The Story of Cosmic Rays*, 25-27, 32-33; Brown, *A History*, 191; Seward Gateway, April 18, 1932, 3; Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 128, 158-59.
- ¹¹ Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 128; SMR, March 1932, 3.
- ¹² Brown, *A History*, 191.
- ¹³ Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 159-64, 226; SMR, April 1932, 3; May 1932, 3. During the summer of 1932, rangers retrieved Koven's body and had it transported to his widow in New Jersey. SMR, July 1932, 3; August 1932, 3.
- ¹⁴ SMR, July 1934, 8; August 1934, 1, 7-8; Brown, *A History*, 191; Roger Robinson email, January 30, 2007.
- ¹⁵ Sfraga, *Bradford Washburn*, 35-38, 87-88, 173.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 174.
- ¹⁷ Lary M. Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: the Critical Documents* (Lanham, Md., Rowman and Littlefield, 1994), 50, 63.
- ¹⁸ As noted in Theodore Catton, *Wonderland: An Administrative History of Mount Rainier National Park* (Seattle, NPS, May 1996), pp. 99 and 258, the Mount Rainier National Park superintendent was licensing the park's climbing guides by 1911; six years later, this service was assumed by the park concessioner. In the Grand Tetons, climber Paul Petzoldt began serving as the area's first professional guide in 1924, five years before Congress established the park. Reynold G. Jackson, "Park of the Matterhorns," in John Daugherty, *A Place Called Jackson Hole: a Historic Resource Study of Grand Teton National Park* (Moose, Wyo., Grand Teton Natural History Association, 1999), Chapter 16.
- ¹⁹ *Federal Register* 1 (June 27, 1936), 676.
- ²⁰ Bestor Robinson to Frank Been, November 14, 1939, in File 201.15, Box 74, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB.
- ²¹ Arno B. Cammerer, "Memorandum for the Washington Office and all Field Offices," March 29, 1940, in File 201.15, see above. Indeed, a revised edition of the NPS's rules and regulations, published in the spring of 1941 (see *Federal Register* 6 [March 26, 1941], 1629), was identical to the original (1936) version except that the new edition added the various Teton Range peaks—Grand Teton, Middle Teton, and South Teton—to regulations that had previously been applied only to peaks in Mount McKinley and Mount Rainier national parks. A later action (*Federal Register* 7 [April 18, 1942], 2906) extended those regulations to Devils Tower in Devils Tower National Monument.
- ²² Arno B. Cammerer, "Memorandum for the Washington Office and all Field Offices," March 29, 1940, in File 201.15, see above.
- ²³ Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 226-29.
- ²⁴ *Federal Register* 9 (September 7, 1944), 11009.
- ²⁵ SMR, September 1947, 1; November 1948, 2; Jerrol G. Coates to Dave Johnston, November 27, 1962, in Folder 65, Series 2, Denali Mountaineering Records Collection (DMRC), DENA Archives. Charles R. "Butch" Farabee, Jr., in *Death Daring and Disaster; Search and Rescue in the National Parks* (Lanham, Md., Roberts Rinehart, 2001), 145, states that park staff completed and distributed the first "formal guidelines" for climbing Mount McKinley in December 1948.
- ²⁶ O. A. Tomlinson to Director NPS, February 9, 1949; Grant Pearson to RD/R4, April 19, 1949; all in Folder 16, Series 2, DMRC.
- ²⁷ These materials were revised in 1949, in 1952, and perhaps in other years as well. See O. A. Tomlinson to Supt. MOMC, May 4, 1949, in Folder 16, Series 2, DMRC; Ronald F. Lee to Washburn, April 1, 1952; Lawrence

- C. Merriam (RD/R4) to Director NPS, May 2, 1952; Pearson, "Climbing Mount McKinley and Other High Mountains in Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska;" all in File 201.15, noted above.
- ²⁸ The mountain-climbing section in the *Code of Federal Regulations*, Title 36, 1949, Section 1.14 (pp. 150-51) is a reflection of the *Federal Register's* rules and regulations issued in 1936 and 1941. For minor changes to the regulations during the 1950s, none of which had a perceptible impact on Mount McKinley climbers, see the following *Federal Register* citations: December 11, 1952 (vol. 17, p. 11197); February 5, 1957 (vol. 22, p. 720); and December 8, 1959 (vol. 24, pp. 9850-51).
- ²⁹ Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 227-28. The one instance prior to 1958 in which climbers did not begin at Wonder Lake was with Bradford Washburn on his 1951 West Buttress climb.
- ³⁰ Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 229; Pearson to American Alpine Club, December 29, 1952, in Folder 19, Series 2, DMRC. Pearson had been part of expeditions into the high Alaska Range in the spring of 1932, the fall of 1944, and the spring of 1947.
- ³¹ O. A. Tomlinson to Supt. MOMC, etc., July 13, 1948; Clemons, "Report of Attendance at NPS Mountain Climbing and Rescue Training School, MORA, September 13-17, 1948;" both in Folder 14, Series 2, DMRC; Farabee, *Death Daring and Disaster*, 145.
- ³² Sfraga, *Bradford Washburn*, 162-63, 168-69, 172-73.
- ³³ Sfraga, *Bradford Washburn*, 156-57; James Ramsey Ullman, *The White Tower* (Philadelphia, Lippincott), 1945. During the late 1940s, the New England Museum of Natural History changed its name to the Boston Museum of Science, a name it retains today. See Sfraga, *Bradford Washburn*, 149, 163; *Anchorage Daily Times*, August 29, 1949, 4.
- ³⁴ Sfraga, *Bradford Washburn*, 159-62.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 160, 162.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 164-68; Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 204-10; SMR, March 1947, 1; SMR, April 1947, 1-2; SMR, May, 1947, 1.
- ³⁷ Sfraga, *Bradford Washburn*, 168-73; SAR, 1948, 4. The hut and other expedition materials were not removed from the mountain, and remaining evidence is still often seen by climbers and park staff. Roger Robinson, review comment, July 11, 2007.
- ³⁸ Newton Drury to Olaus J. Murie memo (attachment), January 9, 1950, in File 845 ("Research"), CCF, RG 79, NARA SB. Washburn, in this case, was assuming a dependence on ground transport. He noted that "the only other practical route, via the great western buttress of McKinley, requires a ground approach via Peters Glacier (or Peters Pass)... McGonagall Pass can be easily reached afoot from Wonder Lake in bad weather or emergency, while the western approach would present a long, complicated journey except by air."
- ³⁹ *Federal Register* 12 (March 13, 1947), 1723-24. Landings at Wonder Lake were allowed until September 1959; see *Federal Register* 24 (June 3, 1959), 4519 and *Federal Register* 24 (September 16, 1959), 7458-59.
- ⁴⁰ SMR, August 1949, 1; SMR, September 1949, 1; *Anchorage Daily Times*, September 12, 1949, 1; Newton Drury to Olaus J. Murie, January 9, 1950, in File 845 ("Research"), see above.
- ⁴¹ Olaus J. Murie to Newton B. Drury, January 17, 1950, in File 845 (see above).
- ⁴² Howard Stagner to Herbert Maier, n.d. (January 1950?); Pearson to Regional Director, Region Four, January 18, 1950; both in File 845 (above).
- ⁴³ Urner Liddel to Olaus J. Murie, January 31, 1950, in File 845 (above).
- ⁴⁴ Drury to Murie, February 20, 1950; Murie to Washburn, April 29, 1950; both in File 845 (above).
- ⁴⁵ O.A. Tomlinson to Murie, February 16, 1950; Lewis F. Clark to Urner Liddel, June 5, 1950; Washburn to Clark, June 9, 1950; all in File 845 (above).
- ⁴⁶ More than a decade later, Murie noted the episode in the article "Mount McKinley; Wilderness Park of the North Country," *National Parks Magazine* 37 (April 1963), 5.
- ⁴⁷ SMR, October 1950, 4.
- ⁴⁸ *New York Times*, May 22, 1951, 2; *Anchorage Daily Times*, July 14, 1951, 8; *Los Angeles Times*, July 19, 1951, 22. Author James Greiner, who spoke to Washburn during the 1970s, stated that the new 1951 route was "motivated by [Washburn's] desire to find a short route that offered less crevasse danger for use by the Office of Naval Research in subsequent cosmic-ray experiments and other scientific work on the mountain." Washburn, putting a positive spin on his efforts, suggested that the cosmic ray work "actually never took place because the levels of energy produced by man-made accelerators soon made cosmic-ray research of this sort no longer practical or necessary." Greiner, *Wager With the Wind: The Don Sheldon Story* (Chicago, Rand McNally, 1974), 78; Washburn, "Mount McKinley Conquered by New Route," *National Geographic Magazine* 104 (August 1953), 219.
- ⁴⁹ Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 227-28; *New York Times*, June 18, 1952, 5.
- ⁵⁰ *Anchorage Daily Times*, July 15, 1959, 16; January 15, 1964, 9.
- ⁵¹ Sfraga, *Bradford Washburn*, 180-88; SMR, June 1951, 1; July 1951, 1; Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 228; Bradford Washburn and David Roberts, *Mount McKinley: the Conquest of Denali* (New York, Abrams,

- 1991), 72, 111. Washburn and Roberts (p. 111) note that Washburn and others were dropped off at elevation 7,650 feet, not 8,500 feet.
- ⁵² Herbert Maier to Supt. MOMC, February 7, 1952, in Folder 19, Series 2, DMRC.
- ⁵³ Washburn to Wirth, March 20, 1952, in File 201.15, Box 74, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB.
- ⁵⁴ Grant Pearson to American Alpine Club, December 29, 1952, in Folder 19, Series 2, DMRC.
- ⁵⁵ Thayer Scudder to Pearson, May 3, 1952, in File 201.15, noted above.
- ⁵⁶ Pearson to Henry S. Francis, Jr., May 7, 1952, in File 201.15, noted above.
- ⁵⁷ SMR, May 1954, 2; May 1955, 4.
- ⁵⁸ Pearson to RD/R4, December 13, 1955, in Folder 29; Ronald F. Lee to RD/R4, March 21, 1956, in Folder 35; Jerrol Coates to Dave Johnston, October 23, 1962, in Folder 67; all in Series 2, DMRC. Washburn, noting climbers' changing time requirements, had advocated the allowance of airdrops four years earlier. Ever the development advocate, Washburn also urged the construction of a "small but rugged ... shelter in McGonagall Pass," an idea that was not shared by NPS officials. Washburn to Director NPS, February 18, 1952, in Folder 19; Washburn to Pearson, March 11, 1955, in Folder 29; Washburn to Wirth, May 29, 1956, in Folder 35; all in Series 2, DMRC.
- ⁵⁹ Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 230-31; SMR, May 1957, 5; June 1957, 5-6; July 1957, 3-4.
- ⁶⁰ Greiner, *Wager With the Wind*, 162; Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 231-34; SMR, various issues, July 1958 to June 1960. In late 1960, park superintendent Samuel King told a potential climber that "the Muldrow Glacier has settled a great deal, but it is not known if it will be sufficiently settled for climbing in 1961." A five-man party was, in fact, able to ascend the Muldrow in July 1961 on its way up North Peak. King to Robert Gardner, September 7, 1960, in Folder 48, Series 2, DMRC.
- ⁶¹ *American Alpine Journal*, Vol. 8, issue 27 (1953), p. 480. To further clarify the boundary location, Bradford Washburn in 1961 sent Sheldon a copy of his recently-issued Mount McKinley map which showed "the southern boundary of McKinley Park marked on it as accurately as the USGS can do it." He did so "because of the constant problem of expeditions that want to be delivered 'as near the Park boundary as possible!'" Washburn to Sheldon, September 18, 1961, in Folder 59, Series 2, DMRC.
- ⁶² Various correspondence in Folders 44, 49, 55, 60, 80, 82, 86, and 91; all in Series 2, DMRC, courtesy of Roger Robinson, DENA. Mike Fisher and Frances Twigg, both of whom flew for Don Sheldon during the early-to mid-1960s, knew that the southeast fork's landing site was inside the park; Twigg, in fact, stated that "Don moved the airstrip 700 feet inside the park so that climbers would have less distance for their climb." Mike Fisher interview, June 28, 2007, and Frances Twigg interview, July 20, 2007; both interviews conducted by Roger Robinson.
- ⁶³ Jerrol Coates to Dave Johnston, October 23, 1962, in Folder 67; Coates to Tom Goldenberg, October 23, 1962, in Folder 69; both in Series 2, DMRC, courtesy of Roger Robinson, DENA. Airdrops for Kahiltna-based climbers apparently continued until the early 1970s, as noted in the University of Oregon discussion.
- ⁶⁴ Greiner, *Wager With the Wind*, 160-61.
- ⁶⁵ Charley Shimanski, "Rescue Cost Recovery, DENA," c. 2001, p. 3; see www.americanalpineclub.org/pdfs/MRcost.pdf.
- ⁶⁶ Lyman L. Woodman, *Duty Station Northwest; the U.S. Army in Alaska and Western Canada, 1867-1987: Volume Three, 1945-1987* (Anchorage, Alaska Historical Society, 1999), 36; Greiner, *Wager With the Wind*, 76; Douglas Beckstead, letter to the author, July 30, 2007; Farabee, *Death Daring and Disaster*, 144. During the mid-to-late 1940s, the U.S. Navy continued to coordinate search and rescue activities for the offshore waters and islands, but in August 1950 the U.S. Air Force assumed control over all territorial search and rescue activities.
- ⁶⁷ NPS, "Climbing Mount McKinley and Other High Mountains in Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska," ca. 1952, in "Mountain Climbing Policy" (file 201.15), CCF, RG 79, NARA SB; Pearson to William D. Hackett, June 9, 1952, in Folder 19, Series 2, DMRC.
- ⁶⁸ Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 230; SMR, May 1954, 2; Roger Robinson, review comment, July 11, 2007; Robinson email, August 22, 2007; Richard and Florence Collins interview, by Jane Bryant, March 2002, in DENA Archives.
- ⁶⁹ *New York Times*, May 27, 1954, 16; May 31, 1954, 14; *Ptarmigan Tracks* (Camp Denali newsletter), November 2004, 1; SMR, April 1954, 4; May 1954, 4; June 1954, 5; Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 229-30; Morton S. Wood, "The First Traverse of Mt. McKinley," *American Alpine Journal*, 1955, pp. 51-69; Jane Bryant emails, March 29-30, 2007; Robert Gerhard, "Denali Dilemma," *American Alpine Journal* 21:1 (1977), 96; Jane Bryant review comments, September 17, 2007.
- ⁷⁰ "National SAR School History" (www.acc.af.mil/afrc/nationalsarschool/index.asp); James H. Isbell to Samuel A. King, March 13, 1961, in Folder 59, Series 2, DMRC.
- ⁷¹ SMR, May 1958, 3.
- ⁷² *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, March 14, 1959, 1.

- ⁷³ Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 232-33; Greiner, *Wager with the Wind*, 159-75; SMR, May 1960, 5; Charles Champlin, "Intrepid Men vs. Mighty Mac," *Life Magazine* 48 (June 6, 1960), 24-31. Those killed in the small-plane crash were Anchorage contractor William Stevenson and Technical Sergeant Robert Elliott from Elmendorf AFB.
- ⁷⁴ SMR, June 1960, 6; *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 24, 1960, 13; June 27, 1960, 13.
- ⁷⁵ Paul B. Crews to Samuel A. King, September 9, 1960; King to Crews, September 13, 1960; Richard J. Stenmark to Supt. MOMC, December 12, 1960; Neil J. Reid to RD/R4, December 14, 1960; all in Folder 48, Series 2, DMRC.
- ⁷⁶ NPS, "Recommended Procedures Involving the NPS, the ARG, the USAFRCC, and Volunteering Private Individuals in Rescue Situations on National Park Lands" (draft), January 11, 1961; James H. Isbell to Samuel A. King, March 13, 1960; both in Folder 59, Series 2, DMRC.
- ⁷⁷ Elroy W. Bohlin to RD/R4, May 1, 1961; Lawrence Merriam to Supt. MOMC, May 11, 1961, both in Folder 59, Series 2, DMRC; SMR, April 1961, 3. Joe Wilcox, in his book *White Winds* (Los Alamitos, Calif., Hwong Publishing, 1981, pp. 36-37), notes that as he prepared for his 1967 expedition, the NPS demanded that climbers "secure the agreement of a qualified rescue group to come to their aid should an emergency occur. The most prominent such group was the ARG.... Previous expeditions had indicated that Park Service permission was routine once ARG approval was given."
- ⁷⁸ John H. Johnston to Robert Bates, December 30, 1960, in Folder 48; Robert Bates to Conrad Wirth, January 6, 1961, in Folder 59; both in Series 2, DMRC; SMR, January 1961, 3, 5.
- ⁷⁹ E.T. Scoyen to RD/R4, March 21, 1961; Merriam to Supt. MOMC, March 29, 1961; Washburn to Scoyen, April 13, 1961; all in Folder 59, Series 2, DMRC.
- ⁸⁰ NPS, "Climbing History of Mount McKinley, Successful Ascents," c. 1970, in "H14, Historical Notes, 1964-70" folder, Box 7, ARCC-00183, AKRO Archives.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*; Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 224-34; Greiner, *Wager With the Wind*, 207-08; Roberta Sheldon, *The Heritage of Talkeetna* (Talkeetna, Talkeetna Editions, 1995), 161. Before 1960, the only non-Americans who had attempted the climb were two Mexican parties in 1952 (one of which was successful), along with a British party that had made an unsuccessful 1956 attempt.
- ⁸² Michael Sfraga (*Bradford Washburn*, 180-81) notes that Moore lived in Fairbanks (and thus began his flight there) but picked up two expedition members at Chelatna Lake (southwest of Mount McKinley) before landing the party on Kahiltna Glacier.
- ⁸³ Sheldon, *Heritage of Talkeetna*, 157; *Milepost*, 1963 edition, 183.
- ⁸⁴ Rupert Pratt, *Touching the Ancient One: A True Story of Tragedy and Reunion* (Tucson, Wheatmark, April 2006), 45; Marilyn Hudson email, May 10, 2007; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 20, 1951, 1; *Anchorage Daily Times*, August 20, 1951, 1.
- ⁸⁵ Sheldon, *Heritage of Talkeetna*, 128-29; Greiner, *Wager With the Wind*, 59, 98, 135, 143.
- ⁸⁶ Sheldon, *Heritage of Talkeetna*, 142, 148-49; Bruce McAllister, *Wings Over Denali; a Photographic History of Aviation in Denali National Park* (Boulder, Roundup Press, 2004), 106, 112-13. The 1964 *Milepost*, published shortly after Talkeetna was reached by road, featured (p. 183) a large advertisement for Talkeetna Air Service and Rainbow Lodge, plus a smaller ad for Cliff Hudson Fishing and Boating Service.
- ⁸⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, April 27, 1992, E-8. Roger Robinson (telephone call, April 6, 2007) notes that after Sheldon died in January 1975, his widow Roberta continued to run the business and employed Fred Richards, and later Buddy Woods, as pilots. In 1976, Jim Sharp purchased the firm and changed its name to Talkeetna Air Taxi; Sharp later sold it to Leonard (Sonny) Kragness. Subsequent owners were Lowell Thomas, Jr., Doug Geeting, and David Lee. Holland ran his business until 1979, when he sold it to Kitty Banner and Kimball Forrest, who founded K2 Aviation; they stayed in business until 1981, when the firm was sold to Jim Okonek, who owned it until the mid-1990s. Hudson Air Service is still owned by the Hudson family and is managed by Jay, Cliff's son. In 1985 a new competitor appeared when Doug Geeting, formerly of Hudson and Talkeetna Air Taxi, began Doug Geeting Aviation. The four companies—Talkeetna Air Taxi, K2 Aviation, Hudson Air Service, and Doug Geeting Aviation—competed from the mid-1980s into the 1990s. *Anchorage Daily News*, June 18, 1989, N-7; June 25, 1989, F-1; NPS/AKRO, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory*, 1984 and 1985 issues.
- ⁸⁸ Wayne Merry interview, May 7, 2007; Jay Hudson interview, May 8, 2007; Art Davidson, *Minus 148°: First Winter Ascent of Mt. McKinley* (Seattle, the Mountaineers, 1999), 30.
- ⁸⁹ SMR, April 1960, 4; April 1964, 2; Wayne Merry interview, May 7, 2007; Art Davidson interview, April 24, 2007.
- ⁹⁰ SMR, June 1963, 3; April 1964, 2; Greiner, *Wager With the Wind*, 210; *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 4, 1978, D-1; Jim Okonek, interview by Bill Brown, February 26 and 27, 1992, on "Project Jukebox" website (<http://uaf-db.uaf.edu/jukebox/denali/html/jiok.htm>); Supt. MOMC to RD/R4, January 11, 1961 in Folder 59, Series 2, DMRC.

⁹¹ SMR, November 1962, 2; April 1963, 2; Catton, *Wonderland: An Administrative History of Mount Rainier National Park*, 472; McGowan obituary, April 27, 2007, on www.sfgate.com. As noted in NPS correspondence (William E. Davis to Jerrol Coates, November 23, 1962, in Folder 65, Series 2, DMRC), Hans Metz—who had summited McKinley via the West Buttress a month earlier than McGowan—also expressed an interest in becoming a climbing guide but did not obtain a special use permit.

⁹² Various correspondence in Folder 75, Series 2, DMRC.

⁹³ Greiner, *Wager With the Wind*, 122-23, 247; *Anchorage Daily Times*, May 12, 1966, 1-2; May 13, 1966, 1.

⁹⁴ BLM, "Serial Register Page" for AA-445; Patent No. 50-73-0203; both in Parcel DENA 10-102 file, AKRO Lands Office. Ms. Sheldon owned the parcel until early 2006, when she granted it to a company called Mountain House LLC. Each year the cabin, which comfortably sleeps four, is open from March to mid-July. Jennifer Forker, "Marooned at the Mountain House," *Alaska* 65 (February 1999), 38-41.

⁹⁵ NPS, "Climbing History of Mount McKinley," see above, states that nine climbing parties successfully climbed Mount McKinley from the north (via Karstens Ridge, Pioneer Ridge, or Wickersham Wall) between 1961 and 1966, inclusively.

⁹⁶ SMR, December 1966, 2; January 1967, 2-3.

⁹⁷ Davidson, *Minus 148°*, 138, 204-06, 213.

⁹⁸ Wilcox, *White Winds*, 2-3.

⁹⁹ SMR, January 1961, 3, 5; November 1962, 2; December 1963, 2.

¹⁰⁰ NPS, *Mountaineering in Mount McKinley National Park*, March 1967, in "Mountaineering Documents, 1966-67, George Hall Collection" folder, DENA AH Collection.

¹⁰¹ Wilcox, *White Winds*, 68, 176-79, 183-84, 191, 213-15, 475-77.

¹⁰² The American Alpine Club, after a thorough analysis of the disaster (in *Accidents in North American Mountaineering*, 1968, pp. 20-30), assigned some blame to NPS rangers, who (in their view) should have radioed a message to the ill-fated "upper party" and ordered them to retreat. Years later, both Wilcox and Snyder wrote books about the expedition and tried to discern what went wrong. Snyder, who wrote *The Hall of the Mountain King* in 1973 (New York, Scribner's, pp. 177-82), stated that the expedition "had tragically bad luck," but he also suggested "circumstances and actions which contributed to the disaster," including inexperience among the Wilcox team, complacency based on the large group size, and poor food and mountaineering skills. Wilcox, who wrote *White Winds* eight years later, felt that rescuers relied too heavily on fixed-wing pilot Don Sheldon instead of helicopter support, and he cited other contributing factors. But he also stated (p. 476) that "it is doubtful that anything could have been done to aid the upper party" because of the extreme wind severity. Jonathan Waterman tried to offer a more objective, nuanced analysis in his *In the Shadow of Denali: Life and Death on Alaska's Mount McKinley* (New York, Lyons Press, 1998), while James M. Tabor wrote a more pointed book about the tragedy in *Forever on the Mountain* (New York, Norton, 2007).

¹⁰³ Wayne Merry interview, May 7, 2007; Nancy Doherty, "McKinley Sees Tragic Season," *Alaska* 42 (October 1976), 8.

¹⁰⁴ *Anchorage Daily News*, March 2, 1994, E-5.

¹⁰⁵ Park climbing guides, since the early 1950s if not before, had applied to all high peaks in the park; and previous *Federal Register* regulations had similarly been applicable to all high peaks in the park. Thus the 1970 regulation, which applied to only Mt. McKinley and Mt. Foraker, was relatively limited in its scope.

¹⁰⁶ *Federal Register* 35 (March 14, 1970), 4554; *Federal Register* 35 (August 15, 1970), 13017.

¹⁰⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, July 10, 1974, 4.

¹⁰⁸ Institute of Arctic Biology, UAF, "Climbing Problems on Mt. McKinley" (draft), November 1, 1967, in "Mountaineering Documents" file, above.

¹⁰⁹ Washburn to Harthon L. Bill, November 17, 1967, in "Mountaineering Documents" file, above.

¹¹⁰ *Anchorage Daily News*, July 21, 1968, 17; Art Davidson interview, April 24, 2007; Arthur L. Davidson, "High Altitude Research on Mount McKinley," *American Alpine Journal* (1969), 371; various 1968 correspondence in Folder 118, Series 2, DMRC. Roger Robinson (review comments, July 11, 2007) notes that park rangers, in the 1990s, "began to uncover large caches of supplies that [Institute personnel] had buried at the 17,200 foot camp." New evidence of the 1968 camp was being uncovered as late as 2006.

¹¹¹ Dan Kuehn to Greg Wolf, December 13, 1974, in "K3417 Press Releases – by MOMC, 1974-75" file, Box 2, Collection 00495, DENA Archives; NPS, "Mount McKinley South Peak, Attempts and Summits," on DENA mountaineering website (<http://www.nps.gov/dena/planyourvisit/mountaineering.htm>); Roger Robinson telephone call, April 6, 2007.

¹¹² Roger Robinson, review comment, July 11, 2007. Beginning in the late 1980s, camp operations were jointly sponsored by a variety of local air services.

¹¹³ Peter Robinson, "Frances Randall," *American Alpine Journal*, 1985, 369; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1984," on DENA mountaineering website (<http://www.nps.gov/dena/planyourvisit/summaryreports.htm>). Roger Robinson wrote the *AAJ* obituary, which the editor inadvertently applied to a fellow Alaska climber with the same surname.

- ¹¹⁴ *Anchorage Daily News*, June 23, 1981, D-1, D-4; *Anchorage Daily Times*, September 6, 1983, B-5; *Anchorage Daily News*, April 27, 2000, B-1
- ¹¹⁵ NPS, "Climbing History of Mount McKinley," see above; *New York Times*, August 24, 1969, X:23; Eberhard Hantsch, "Eight Days to the Top," *Alaska* 36 (October 1970), 45-47. Further information about Genet is found in Judy Shuler, "A Man and His Mountain," *Alaskafest*, June 1977, 27-31; Richard Loren Doege, "Ray Genet" (obituary), *American Alpine Journal* 22:2 (1980), 693-94; various *Anchorage Daily Times* and *Anchorage Daily News* articles for October 8-9, 1979; and Waterman, *In the Shadow of Denali*, 96-104. Genet apparently did not participate in a 1964 summiting of Mt. Huntington, eight miles south of Mt. McKinley, as noted in Davidson's *Minus 148°* (p. 24).
- ¹¹⁶ Genet's company was apparently Alaska Mountain Guides in 1971 and 1975 but Genet Expeditions in 1973; see Genet to Ernest Borgman, April 30, 1971, in File NR 1-2 (1971), Series 88, RG 01, ASA; Daniel Kuehn to Genet, July 6, 1973, in "Correspondence, AMG/Genet Expeditions, 1977" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives; Gary Brown to Allen Steck, October 24, 1975, in "Correspondence, Mountain Travel, 1977" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives; NPS, "Record of Active Revocable Permits," 1971, in "Special Use Permits" file, Box 99, Series 1, DARC, DENA Archives.
- ¹¹⁷ Genet, as shown by various letters and memos during this period (see files directly above and below), exhibited a distinctly independent streak; he often creatively interpreted NPS regulations, and customers complained because he overextended himself or exhibited poor customer service. In 1973, NPS officials allowed his special use permit to lapse, but soon afterward they renewed it.
- ¹¹⁸ See Robert A. Gerhard to Joe Horiskey, October 18, 1977, in "Correspondence, Rainier Mountaineering, 1977" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives; Allen Steck to Gary Brown, October 16, 1975, in "Correspondence, Mountain Travel, 1977" file, noted above; Genet to Borgman, April 30, 1971, noted above; SAR, 1974, 5.
- ¹¹⁹ Lignite is an Alaska Railroad stop located just north of Healy; the Mercer Ranch is located at the end of Lignite Road, which extends east from the Parks Highway.
- ¹²⁰ Wilcox, *White Winds*, 59, 69.
- ¹²¹ SMR, August 1957, 5; September 1957, 5.
- ¹²² SMR, April 1961, 3; February 1964, 2; August 1964, 5; Roger Robinson, review comment, July 11, 2007.
- ¹²³ NPS, "Climbing History of Mount McKinley," see above; NPS, "Annual Mountaineering and Search and Rescue Report" for MOMC, January 7, 1971, in "Annual Reports, 1953-72" file, Box 5, ARCC-00183, AKSO; Jane Bryant email, January 4, 2007; Roger Robinson, review comment, July 11, 2007.
- ¹²⁴ *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 26, 1973, 23.
- ¹²⁵ Jeb Schenck, "Mt. McKinley—Littered Overcrowded Route," *Summit* 16 (December 1970), 24-25.
- ¹²⁶ Bill Sherwonit, "Mountain of Trash: Decades of Climbers Have Fouled Denali," *Alaska* 68 (May-June 2002), 35.
- ¹²⁷ *Tacoma News-Tribune*, May 26, 1971, C-2; Doris M. Ewing, "A Mt. McKinley Attack on Trash," *Smithsonian* 3 (May 1972), 54-57; *Anchorage Daily Times*, November 20, 1972, 49; July 11, 1973, 35.
- ¹²⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, August 31, 1974, 2; "News & Notes," *Off Belay* #21 (June 1975), 39.
- ¹²⁹ Gary Brown, "And a Reply," *American Alpine News* #136 (March 1976), 15.
- ¹³⁰ *New York Times*, November 16, 1975, X:5, and Gail Miller Menschel, "Crowd at the Top," *Alaska* 42 (November 1976), 98. Bill Sherwonit, in "Mountain of Trash," 34-35, notes that Grimm continued to bring cleanup crews to the mountain until 1977.
- ¹³¹ Roger Robinson, "Crisis on Denali," pp. 15, 17; Gary Brown, "And a Reply," pp. 15, 19; both in *American Alpine News* #136, March 1976.
- ¹³² Gerhard replaced Bruce Wadlington, who managed climbers' activities but showed little interest in spending extended periods on the mountain.
- ¹³³ Robert Gerhard, interview by Frank Norris, April 28, 2005; "NPS Bicentennial Denali Expedition" folder (#300) in Series 2, DMRC, DENA Archives. Gerhard's team included park carpenter Tommy Adams, interpretive specialist Bill Garry, mountaineering ranger Nick Hartzell, backcountry ranger Jack Hebert, and seasonal ranger Johnny Johnson. The climb was one of two park bicentennial projects; the other was the living history demonstration at the Upper Toklat (Pearson) cabin, described in Chapter 12.
- ¹³⁴ Gerhard, "Denali Dilemma," 100. Gerhard's remarks were largely duplicated in his article "McKinley: What Does the Future Hold?" *Summit* 23 (February-March 1977), 14-19. Details of the rescue are noted in Ralph Baldwin, "The Crisis on Denali," *Off Belay* #30 (December 1976), 8.
- ¹³⁵ Doherty, "McKinley Sees Tragic Season," 8; Gerhard, "Denali Dilemma," 96.
- ¹³⁶ Baldwin, "The Crisis on Denali," 3.
- ¹³⁷ Articles mentioning Horton's trip, and his policies toward McKinley climbing, include *Anchorage Daily Times*, August 3, 1976, 4; August 12, 1976, 16; and August 14, 1976, 4.
- ¹³⁸ Baldwin, "Crisis on Denali," 3; Doherty, "McKinley Sees Tragic Season," 8; Robert Gerhard, "McKinley: What Does the Future Hold?" *Summit* 23 (February-March 1977), 15; Gerhard, "Denali Dilemma," 97; SAR, 1977, 4.

- ¹³⁹ Gerhard, "Denali Dilemma," 97; Shuler, "A Man and His Mountain," 28. Baldwin, "Crisis on Denali," pp. 8-9 explains each policy option and its feasibility and short-term applicability. He concluded his remarks by recommending that the NPS launch an educational campaign instead of various Draconian alternatives, and that Mount McKinley climbers adopt a "fundamental responsibility ... to prepare himself for the task at hand."
- ¹⁴⁰ Gerhard, "Denali Dilemma," 99-100; Baldwin, "Crisis on Denali," 9. The study is noted in the *Anchorage Daily News*, August 5, 1976, 8, and the *Seattle Times*, September 26, 1976, A-25.
- ¹⁴¹ *Anchorage Daily Times*, August 12, 1976, 16; November 1, 1976, 23; November 2, 1976, 4.
- ¹⁴² Climbing ranger Roger Robinson, in a January 2007 interview, noted that during the 1977 and 1978 climbing seasons, the two seasonal rangers stayed in a small room at the Talkeetna Fire Hall. They typically met climbers at either the railroad depot or the village airstrip.
- ¹⁴³ SAR, 1977, 3-4; Robert Gerhard, "Climbing in Mount McKinley National Park," *American Alpine Journal* 21:2 (1978), 503-04; Tom Walker, "High Landing," *Alaska* 43 (September 1977), 81.
- ¹⁴⁴ Sherwonit, "Mountain of Trash," 35, 68; NPS, "2000 Mountaineering Summary, DENA," 2.
- ¹⁴⁵ Gerhard, "Climbing in Mount McKinley National Park," 504; Gerhard, "Mountaineering in Mount McKinley National Park," *American Alpine Journal* 22:1 (1979), 163.
- ¹⁴⁶ SAR, 1978, 1-2; Gerhard, "Mountaineering in Mount McKinley National Park," 161-63; Joe Van Horn interview, April 20, 2007.
- ¹⁴⁷ Daniel J. Tobin, Jr. to Ted Stevens, February 16, 1978, in "Climbing Policy" file, DENA AH Collection, AKRO; *Anchorage Daily Times*, July 3, 1978, 4.
- ¹⁴⁸ Bob Gerhard to Joe Alston and Ralph Tingey, December 1, 1981, in "NOLS 80-86" folder, in "Mountain Guides 82-84" box, DENA Concessions office; Carlene Dickey, "Finding Aid, Denali Mountaineering Records, 1906-1994" (Denver, NPS, 2002), 54-79, in DENA Archives.
- ¹⁴⁹ Robert Gerhard interview, September 23, 2003; Richard Meehan to Supt. MOMC, June 4, 1979, in "Correspondence, Alaska Mountain Guides, Genet Expeditions, 1977" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives; Gerhard to Joe Horiskey, October 18, 1977, in "Correspondence, Rainier Mountaineering, 1977" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.
- ¹⁵⁰ SAR, 1978, 1-2; Gerhard to W. Gerald Lynch, April 20, 1979, in "Correspondence, Rainier Mountaineering, 1977" file, see above.
- ¹⁵¹ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1981" on Denali mountaineering website; Evaluation Panel to Supt. MOMC, November 18, 1980, in "Evaluation and Recommendation, Concession Permits, Mountaineering Guide Services" folder, "1980 and 1993 Mountaineering Prospectus" box, DENA Concessions office. In 1980, Genet Expeditions was under new management, inasmuch as Ray Genet had died on October 2, 1979, shortly after summiting Mt. Everest.
- ¹⁵² *Anchorage Daily Times*, January 5, 1981, B-1; January 2, 1981, A-7.
- ¹⁵³ Robert Gerhard interview, September 23, 2003; Baldwin, "The Crisis on Denali," 6; Bob Gerhard draft memo, February 4, 1981, in "Evaluation and Recommendation" folder (see above). Also, William Truesdell to Jim Ratz, June 9, 1981; Robert Cunningham to Ratz, December 30, 1981; and NPS, "Concession Permit No. CX9830-2-0001," all in "NOLS 80-86" folder, "Mountain Guides 82-84" box, DENA Concessions office.
- ¹⁵⁴ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1981 and 1983 editions.
- ¹⁵⁵ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1984 through 1986 editions.
- ¹⁵⁶ *Anchorage Daily Times*, January 5, 1981, B-1; NPS, "Mount McKinley South Peak, Attempts and Summits," DENA Mountaineering website; NPS/AKSO, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory*, various issues, 1981-2006.
- ¹⁵⁷ NPS/AKSO, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory*, various issues, 1981-1983.
- ¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, various issues, 1981-1989. See the *Anchorage Daily News*, June 25, 1989, F-1 for the trend from air tours to flightseeing. Beginning in 1988, NPS concessions personnel required flying services to obtain separate CULs for air tour and flightseeing operations.
- ¹⁵⁹ Jane Bryant email, May 5, 2006; NPS, *Commercial Park Users* (DENA directory), June 1982, in AKRO-EC files; NPS, "Record of Active Revocable Permits" (chart), 1971, in "Special Use Permits" file, Folder 99, Series 1, DARC, DENA Archives; Laura Larsen with Sandy Kogl, "Dog Teams on Mount McKinley," *Alaska* 41 (March 1975), 33.
- ¹⁶⁰ Jane Bryant email, May 5, 2006; Will and Linda Forsberg to Jane Bryant, September 24, 2007; NPS/AKSO, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory*, various issues, 1982-present.
- ¹⁶¹ NPS, "Mount McKinley South Peak, Attempts and Summits," on NPS/DENA Mountaineering website (see above).
- ¹⁶² [Daryl Miller], "Climbing Deaths on Denali," on NPS/DENA Mountaineering website (see above).
- ¹⁶³ *Anchorage Daily Times*, October 17, 1979, 13; July 1, 1980, A-6; July 3, 1980, A-9; July 28, 1981, A-6; June 9, 1982, A-10; September 23, 1982, A-10; *Anchorage Daily News*, May 16, 1981, A-1; July 17, 1988, J-1, J-3.
- ¹⁶⁴ *Federal Register* 35 (August 15, 1970), 13017.
- ¹⁶⁵ Doug Buchanan to Cecil Andrus, October 12, 1979; *Anchorage Daily Times*, September 6, 1983, B-5; *Federal Register* 45 (May 22, 1980), 34759.

- ¹⁶⁶ *Anchorage Daily News*, June 20, 1980, A-8; *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 22, 1980, E-1; July 1, 1980, A-6.
- ¹⁶⁷ *Federal Register* 45 (November 25, 1980), 78119-20; *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 23, 1980, A-7; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 10, 1980, A-9; Robert A. Gerhard, "Revised Regulations for Mountaineering Within Mount McKinley National Park," *Summit* 26 (November-December 1980), 1. As late as 1993 (*Anchorage Daily News*, August 3, 1993, E-3), an article noted that "at present climbers can register the day they arrive in Talkeetna."
- ¹⁶⁸ *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 25, 1978, E-12; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 30, 1979, A-3; May 16, 1981, A-1, A-10; May 30, 1982, A-1, A-12; Woodman, *Duty Station Northwest, Volume Three*, 172-73, 201, 214, 224, 266.
- ¹⁶⁹ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1981," on Denali mountaineering web site (see above). Nine years earlier, a group called Life Bound, Ltd. had proposed the placing of rescue equipment (including emergency oxygen) on an "icy ledge" at the 17,500-foot level of Mt. McKinley. So far as is known, however, the equipment was never delivered. *Anchorage Daily Times*, May 5, 1972, 5; *Anchorage Daily News*, May 7, 1972, 18.
- ¹⁷⁰ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1982," on Denali mountaineering web site (see above); *Anchorage Daily Times*, September 23, 1982, A-10 and B-5; October 5, 1982, A-11.
- ¹⁷¹ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1983 and 1984 editions, on Denali mountaineering web site (see above); SAR, 1983, 2; Jon Waterman, "Mt. McKinley: Alaska's Highest Ranger Station," *Courier* 30 (January 1985), 1-2.
- ¹⁷² NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1983," *Anchorage Daily Times*, May 23, 1983, B-4; *Anchorage Daily News*, May 22, 1983, A-1, A-12; May 26, 1983, A-12.
- ¹⁷³ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1984, 1985, and 2000 editions; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 19, 1984, C-1; *Anchorage Daily Times*, July 18, 1984, B-1; July 20, 1984, A-10; July 21, 1984, A-10.
- ¹⁷⁴ Alaska Railroad, "Memorandum of Rental Agreement" (Contract 69-25-0003-5165), April 14, 1980, in "Front Misc." file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.
- ¹⁷⁵ Biographical sketches of Gerhard and Seibert are noted in the *Anchorage Daily News* issues of May 13, 1984, O-4 and July 14, 1991, O-10, respectively.
- ¹⁷⁶ SAR, 1984, 2; Roger Robinson interview, January 2007;
- ¹⁷⁷ NPS, "Mount McKinley South Peak, Attempts and Summits" (chart), DENA Mountaineering website. The 1989 crowds, more than half of whom reached the summit, prompted climbing ranger Bob Seibert to quip "Believe it or not, we do have people standing in line waiting for their turn on Mount McKinley." Yereth Rosen, ed., "From Ketchikan to Barrow," *Alaska* 56 (February 1990), 11.
- ¹⁷⁸ [Daryl Miller], "Climbing Deaths on Denali," on Denali mountaineering web site. During the 1985-1995 period, at least two climbers died on Mount McKinley in every year except 1991 (which had no deaths) and 1993 (which had one).
- ¹⁷⁹ *Anchorage Daily News*, July 17, 1988, J-1; August 9, 1991, M-1; August 11, 1992, B-3.
- ¹⁸⁰ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1985 through 1995 editions; SAR, 1987, 6.
- ¹⁸¹ SAR, 1986, 2; SAR, 1987, 6; "The Mountain That Eats Koreans," *Economist* 323 (June 20, 1992), 28; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 3, 1993, E-3. The two foreign language brochures had been produced in 1983; see NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1983, 1987, 1988, 1992, and 1995 editions.
- ¹⁸² *Anchorage Daily News*, June 23, 1990, B-3; Rosen, "From Ketchikan to Barrow," 11; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1990."
- ¹⁸³ Seibert, "Denali National Park and Preserve Mountaineering Summary, 1990," *American Alpine Journal* 33 (1991), 154; Alan Ewert, "High Altitude Mountaineering Setting: Visitor Characteristics and Management Preferences," unpub. mss., August 1992, in Talkeetna Mountaineering Center (NPS) files.
- ¹⁸⁴ *Anchorage Daily News*, May 27, 1992, B-6 and June 7, 1992, E-1; *New York Times*, May 19, 1992, A-17; May 24, 1992, 32; and June 2, 1992, A-14; Michael Meyer, "Deathwatch on Mount McKinley," *Newsweek* 119 (June 8, 1992), 31; "The Mountain That Eats Koreans," 28.
- ¹⁸⁵ "Deathwatch on Mount McKinley," 31; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 7, 1992, E-1, E-4.
- ¹⁸⁶ *Anchorage Daily News*, August 11, 1992, B-1, B-3; October 7, 1993, E-1; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1992 edition.
- ¹⁸⁷ SAR, 1991, 7; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1995 edition, on DENA website. The Army had first used a Chinook on the mountain in April 1976, when it rescued Hanspeter Trachsel from the 17,200-foot level. Even earlier, in April 1972, the Army had helicopters capable of summit-level rescue operations, but did not employ them until later. Greiner, *Wager With the Wind*, 242; [Roger Robinson], "Chronology of Firsts in Aviation History on Mt. McKinley" (chart), in Talkeetna Mountaineering Center files.
- ¹⁸⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, August 3, 1993, E-1, E-3.
- ¹⁸⁹ *New York Times*, July 11, 1993, V-3; "Pre-Paid Deliverance," *Economist* 328 (September 11, 1993), 23; *Anchorage Daily News*, October 7, 1993, E-1.

- ¹⁹⁰ *Anchorage Daily News*, September 12, 1993, D-1; February 28, 1994, D-2; *New York Times*, September 14, 1993, A-18; "Climbing Costs," *Alaska* 61 (April 1995), 13.
- ¹⁹¹ *Anchorage Daily News*, October 7, 1993, E-1; March 2, 1994, E-1, E-5; April 6, 1994, C-1, C-6; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1995," on DENA website.
- ¹⁹² *Anchorage Daily News*, December 9, 1994, E-1, E-3; *Federal Register* 59 (December 15, 1994), 64696-97; "Climb Up, Pay Up," *Alaska Business Monthly* 11 (January 1995), 10; "Climbing Costs," *Alaska* 61 (April 1995), 13.
- ¹⁹³ *Federal Register* 59 (December 15, 1994), 64697.
- ¹⁹⁴ SAR, 1995, 1, 9; SAR, 1997, 10-11. In 1995, climbers on Mount Rainier also began paying a fee; it was just \$15, or \$25 for a season pass. See *Anchorage Daily News*, December 9, 1994, E-3; Hal Clifford, "After the Fall," *National Parks* 71 (March/April 1997), 34-37.
- ¹⁹⁵ The NPS had been trying to get climbing groups to preregister since 1992. The agency stated that year that beginning in 1994, all groups would need to preregister by February 15. That action, however, did not appear in the *Federal Register* until December 1994 (see above). NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1992 and 1993 editions, on DENA website.
- ¹⁹⁶ *Federal Register* 60 (March 31, 1995), 16579-80; September 13, 1995, 47513-14; February 23, 1996, 6943-44; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1995."
- ¹⁹⁷ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1996."
- ¹⁹⁸ NPS/AKSO, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory*, various issues, 1985 to 1995; *Anchorage Daily News*, April 27, 1992, E-8.
- ¹⁹⁹ See "1984/85 Fact Sheet, Mountaineering Guides" and "88/89 Fact Sheet" folders, in DENA Concessions office; *Federal Register* 54 (February 3, 1989), 5555. On January 30, 1985, NPS Regional Director Roger Contor wrote U.S. Senator Ted Stevens and noted that the agency was pleased with the record of all seven mountaineering guide services.
- ²⁰⁰ NPS/AKSO, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory*, various issues, 1981-1989.
- ²⁰¹ *Anchorage Daily News*, February 19, 1992, A-1, A-8.
- ²⁰² *Anchorage Daily News*, March 19, 1992, B-1, B-3; April 12, 1992, E-1, E-9; April 16, 1992, B-2; April 27, 1992, E-8; May 10, 1992, J-1, J-3.
- ²⁰³ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1992," on DENA website. The Genet Expeditions story is told, primarily from Harry Johnson's point of view, in Peter Porco's "Fall from Grace," in *Alaska* 64 (May-June 1994), pp. 30-37.
- ²⁰⁴ NPS/AKSO, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory*, 1992 through 1994 editions; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1993," on DENA website.
- ²⁰⁵ Deb Ajango, "The Concessionaire Question," *Alaska Business Monthly* 10 (May 1994), 57; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 4, 1994, B-1, B-3; Jeannie Woodring, "Court Orders Concessionaire Off Mountain," *Alaska Business Monthly* 10 (August 1994), 10; *Jacobs vs. U.S.A., et al.*, June 16, 1994, p. 22, in Jacobs Lawsuit file, DENA Concessions office.
- ²⁰⁶ Concessions Analyst, ARO to Chief of Concessions, ARO, September 1, 1994, in "Mountaineering Prospectus" folder [1994-95], Current Files, DENA Concessions office; NPS/AKSO, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory*, 1995 through 2006 editions. In an ironic footnote, AAI—despite having its permit taken away—soon returned as an Old Park mountaineering guide because the company, in November 1998, purchased Fantasy Ridge Alpinism, Inc., which had held a concessions permit since 1989. It is still one of the six permit holders. Mary Wysong interview, May 15, 2007.
- ²⁰⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, May 6, 1994, E-1; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1991 and 1993 through 1995 editions.
- ²⁰⁸ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1985 and 1989 editions.
- ²⁰⁹ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1989," on DENA website; Rosen, "From Ketchikan to Barrow," 11.
- ²¹⁰ *Anchorage Daily News*, July 14, 1991, O-10; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1993 and 1995 editions, on DENA website.
- ²¹¹ Martin Hansen (AKRO Lands Division), in an October 24, 2007 email, notes that the lease for the rescue-cache property was signed in 1990.
- ²¹² Roger Robinson interview, January 2007 and May 1, 2007; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1989, 1990 and 1995 editions.
- ²¹³ Roger Robinson interview, see above; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1995 edition.
- ²¹⁴ [Daryl Miller], "Mount McKinley South Peak, Attempts and Summits," on DENA mountaineering website.
- ²¹⁵ *Anchorage Daily News*, June 21-24, 1998, A-1.
- ²¹⁶ *Anchorage Daily News*, August 14, 1998, A-1; August 23, 1998, A-1. The lengthy August 23 article gives an excellent description of the pros and cons of insurance, bonds, fees, and other revenue-enhancing possibilities.

- ²¹⁷ 106th Congress, 1st Session, "Denali National Park and Preserve Rescues" (*Senate Report 106-71*), June 9, 1999, 2.
- ²¹⁸ 105th Congress, 2nd Session, "Mount McKinley Rescue Activities" (*Senate Hearing 105-775*), August 24, 1998, *passim*; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 25, 1998, A-1; *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 28, 1998, C-9.
- ²¹⁹ U.S. Senate, 105th Congress, 2nd Session, S. 2639, introduced October 15, 1998.
- ²²⁰ U.S. Senate, 106th Congress, 1st Session, S. 698, introduced March 24, 1999.
- ²²¹ *Senate Report 106-71*, June 9, 1999, 5-6; U.S. Senate, 106th Congress, 1st Session, S. 698, various references in www.thomas.loc.gov. After the president signed it, the bill became Public Law 106-486.
- ²²² NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 2001," on DENA mountaineering website.
- ²²³ NPS, *Analysis of Cost Recovery for High-altitude Rescues on Mt. McKinley, Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska*, August 2001, in Talkeetna Mountaineering Center files.
- ²²⁴ *Anchorage Daily News*, April 25, 2005, B-1, B-2.
- ²²⁵ NPS, *General Management Plan*, November 1986, 21, 27; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary – 1991," on DENA mountaineering website; NPS, etc., *Development Concept Plan, South Side, Denali, Alaska*, February 1997, 14-16.
- ²²⁶ Robert K. Yearout (WASO) to Regional Director, Alaska Region, June 11, 1997, in "C3823 IBP Converted to CP (Air Taxi Operation DENA)" file, AKRO Concessions Collection.
- ²²⁷ *Federal Register* 67 (November 8, 2002), 68157-58; *Anchorage Daily News*, March 15, 2006, G-1; Jill Morgan emails, May 1, 2007 and May 7, 2007. Between 2002 and 2007, the various carriers were issued a series of one-year permit extensions.
- ²²⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, October 15, 1999, C-1; January 18, 2002, B-3; June 15, 2005, B-3; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2001 and 2002 editions.
- ²²⁹ NPS, *Draft Backcountry Management Plan, DENA*, February 2003, 39, 49-61, 92-95.
- ²³⁰ Roger Robinson, review comment, August 22, 2007; also see Vern Tejas's comment in the NPS's *Backcountry Management Plan, DENA*, January 2006, 347-48.
- ²³¹ NPS, *Draft Backcountry Management Plan, DENA*, February 2003, 39, 42, 96.
- ²³² *Ibid.*, 50-63.
- ²³³ *Ibid.*, 105; NPS, *Revised Draft Backcountry Management Plan, DENA* (April 2005), 193, 442-68; Mike Tranel interview, October 19, 2006.
- ²³⁴ NPS, *Revised Draft Backcountry Management Plan, DENA*, April 2005, 43, 55-56, 71-72, 101, 193.
- ²³⁵ NPS, *Final Backcountry Management Plan, DENA*, January 2006, 38, 48, 54.
- ²³⁶ *Anchorage Daily News*, March 5, 2006, K-1.
- ²³⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, March 15, 2006, G-1, G-10.
- ²³⁸ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1995 and 2000 editions, on DENA mountaineering website.
- ²³⁹ Sherwonit, "Mountain of Trash," 35; NPS, *Mountaineering, Denali National Park and Preserve*, on DENA mountaineering website.
- ²⁴⁰ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1995, 1996, and 2000 editions; Roger Robinson interview, May 1, 2007.
- ²⁴¹ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2000 and 2001 editions; Tom Bol, "Denali Patrol: Rangers Protect Climbers and the Mountain," *Alaska* 68 (May-June 2002), 26.
- ²⁴² NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2003 edition.
- ²⁴³ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2000 edition; Sherwonit, "Mountain of Trash," 68, 70.
- ²⁴⁴ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2001 and 2003 editions; Sherwonit, "Mountain of Trash," 70; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 6, 2001, H-10; July 23, 2001, B-1; March 3, 2002, B-3.
- ²⁴⁵ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2001 edition; Sherwonit, "Mountain of Trash," 70;
- ²⁴⁶ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2002 and 2003 editions; Roger Robinson interview, May 1, 2007.
- ²⁴⁷ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2004 edition.
- ²⁴⁸ Robinson interview, May 1, 2007; NPS, *Final Backcountry Management Plan*, January 2006, 51-52; NPS, *DENA, Compendium*, Sec. 2.14(b); 2006 edition, p. 14, and 2007 edition, p. 10.
- ²⁴⁹ Sherwonit, "Mountain of Trash," 35, 68, 70; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2003 and 2004 editions. In 2001, one ranger noted that "we find a cache about every hundred yards at the end of the season that needs to be cleaned up." Bol, "Denali Patrol," 26.
- ²⁵⁰ Garey Coatney to Associate Regional Director, Operations, May 5, 1989; Rebecca Hallgarth to Chief Ranger, South District, DENA, October 30, 1989; both in "Talkeetna Visitor Center/Roberta Sheldon, DENA-O" folder, AKRO Lands Division files; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1989 edition.
- ²⁵¹ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 1990 edition; Joe Durrenberger to Rebecca Hallgarth, July 9, 1990; Regional Director to Chief, Land Resources Division, WASO, December 24, 1990; Regional Director to Regional Solicitor, December 11, 1991; all in "Retired File/Phillip Wallona, DENA-O" folder, AKRO Lands Division files.
- ²⁵² *Anchorage Daily News*, March 25, 1992, B-2.

²⁵³ NPS, *Draft Development Concept Plan, Environmental Statement, South Slope, DENA* (May 1993), 19.

²⁵⁴ Despite that rejection, however, the idea of a Talkeetna-area visitor center remained. The report of the Denali Task Force, in October 1994, recommended small visitor centers at Talkeetna and two other south slope sites, and in March 1996 (see Chapter 10), the revised draft DCP called for visitor facilities and services to be developed at Talkeetna and other points "when the need and opportunity to do so are established."

²⁵⁵ SAR, 1993, 7; SAR, 1995, 9; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1995;" Brad Richie interview, April 30, 2007; NPS, *Design Analysis, Mountaineering Contact Station*, April 1994, in TIC Collection (184/D-285).

²⁵⁶ SAR, 1996, 5; SAR, 1997, 5; NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report – 1996;" *Anchorage Daily News*, June 7, 1997, B-1.

²⁵⁷ "James and Susan Kellard 00008/Talkeetna Parking (Mountaineering Center)/DENA" folder (DENA O-29), AKRO Lands Division.

²⁵⁸ NPS, "Mountaineering Summary Report," 2001 and 2006 editions.



Chapter Fourteen: Mining and Kantishna-Area Management

As noted in Chapters 1 and 2, mining was an established reality in the hills immediately north of the Alaska Range before the first park proposals were offered to the U.S. Congress. On June 4, 1903, Judge James Wickersham located some encouraging gold prospects along Chitsia Creek at the north end of the Kantishna Hills, and the announcement of his find back in Fairbanks soon brought prospectors into the area.¹ Joe Dalton's 1904 discovery along Crooked Creek, along with Jack Horn and Joe Quigley's finds along Glacier Creek early the following year brought nearly a thousand hopeful gold seekers to the area in the summer of 1905, and several instant towns sprang up at river confluences in the Kantishna Hills and along the major access routes. Prospectors soon learned that the area's wealth was indisputable but limited; some claims along Eureka and Glacier creeks produced small fortunes, but elsewhere the mood was pessimistic. In the wake of the 1906 season, the Kantishna District was all but deserted, with all but fifty or so of its former inhabitants off to more promising venues.²

Charles Sheldon, who arrived in the gamelands north of Mount McKinley in July 1906, was well aware of the area's mining activity. With him was mail carrier Harry Karstens, who had prospected in the Kantishna area in 1905 and returned in early 1906. During his visit, Sheldon talked to local miners, passed by their cabins, and witnessed the mining landscape.³ And during his return visit, between August 1907 and June 1908, he became fast friends with Joe Quigley and Fannie McKenzie, two prospectors who lived together on Glacier Creek.⁴

Between 1908 and the outbreak of World War I, the Kantishna area was home to a small, scattered number of miners who were isolated not only from the outside world but even, to a large extent, from each other. Glen Creek, during this period, offered the only cluster of cabins large enough to be called a "town," while other miners were located on Glacier, Eureka, Moose, and other nearby creeks.⁵ During this period other areas to the south and west were scouted out for minerals; Wesley Dunkle, for example, showed an interest in the area surrounding Slippery Creek in 1915 (although no claims were filed), and along Stampede Creek, "an open cut, excavated in 1916, disclosed a large body of nearby pure stibnite [antimony ore], at least 12 feet thick."⁶

Mining and the Mount McKinley Park Bill

In the fall of 1915, Charles Sheldon began to campaign for a national park that, among other purposes, would protect the Dall sheep and other megafauna from Fairbanks-area market hunters (see Chapter 2). Since 1909, Alaska had been represented in Congress by Delegate (and former Fairbanks judge) James Wickersham. Sheldon, by good fortune, had met Wickersham a number of times over the years at Boone and Crockett Club dinners. Owing to his 1903 attempt to climb Mount McKinley, Wickersham was familiar with the Kantishna country, and perhaps because he discovered gold in that area, he had a particular sensitivity for the welfare of the area's prospectors and miners. Pragmatic as he was, however, he (like Sheldon) was awestruck by the area's beauty, and he was convinced that a large, forested area between Wonder Lake and the McKinley River should be "withdrawn from disposal and preserved for the use of those who shall come after us..."⁷

Sheldon, wisely, decided early in the Boone and Crockett Club campaign to see Wickersham and ask for his thoughts on the matter, because he knew that any bill passing Congress would need Wickersham's blessing. By December 1915 they had met, and Sheldon told Stephen Mather (from the U.S. Interior Department) that the area "should be created under provisions which will protect local interests in mining." More specifically, any park bill would need to contain provisions protecting both existing and future mining claims.⁸

As a result, the initial Congressional bills introduced in April 1916 (H.R. 14775 and S. 5716) contained four elements favorable to mining interests. First, Section 2 of these bills stated that those who had existing claims, locations, or entries—whether for minerals or "any other purpose whatsoever"—would be able to have "full use and enjoyment of his land." Second, Section 4 stated "that the mineral-land laws of the United States are hereby extended to the lands included within the park." Third, Section 6 stated—even though the park was "established as a game refuge"—that "prospectors and miners engaged in prospecting or mining in said park may take and kill therein so much game or birds as may be needed for their actual necessities when short of food..." And finally, despite the ameliorating language in Section 4, the park boundaries were drawn so as to eliminate the

Placer mining on Moose Creek, 1982.
DENA 5, Denali National Park and
Preserve Museum Collection



Glacier City, shown above in 1922, was one of the settlements born during the gold rush to the Kantishna District in 1905. Located at the confluence of Glacier Creek and the Bearpaw River, it served as a supply point and overwintering location for prospectors long after other towns were abandoned. L.M. Prindle Collection, #531, U.S. Geological Survey

Kantishna Hills, which was the only known area where mining claims had been located up to that time. During the early months of 1916, the exact location of these boundaries had been debated by Sheldon, Thomas Riggs, and other authorities (see Map 2 in Volume 1), but they remained unchanged during Congress's consideration of the park bill.⁹

As Chapter 2 has noted, that portion of Section 6 regarding the need for prospectors and miners to kill game and birds was debated in the full House on February 19, 1917, and Rep. William Stafford of Wisconsin recommended that the hunting privileges “should be under such regulations as the Secretary of the Interior may prescribe.” But Rep. Stafford’s amendment, which may have been sponsored by conservationists, was defeated, and the final bill did not include it. The language in Section 4 was also debated that day. Rep. Franklin W. Mondell of Wyoming argued on the House floor that “the mineral laws of the United States, some of them, do not apply to any part of Alaska.” As a result, he urged that Section 4 be replaced with the following verbiage: “Nothing in this Act shall in any way modify

or affect the mineral land laws now applicable to the lands in said park.” The bill, otherwise unchanged except for minor wordsmithing, was sent on to President Wilson, who signed it into law on February 26.¹⁰

Mount McKinley National Park, the first national park to be established after the passage of the National Park Service’s so-called “Organic Act” in August 1916, differed significantly from previous park bills. The first park bill (Yellowstone in 1872) had not prohibited hunting, nor had the 1899 Mount Rainier National Park bill, but later bills—in May 1894 and June 1916, respectively—stopped the practice.¹¹ Other early reservations, such as Yosemite and General Grant (Sequoia) national park, never allowed hunting because of U.S. Army rules.¹² The Organic Act of 1916 omitted any specific mention of the subject (only that “the fundamental purpose of the said parks ... is to conserve the ... wild life therein”), but the May 1918 “Lane Letter” that “provided an outline of the administrative policy to which the new Service will adhere” expressly stated that “hunting will not be permitted in any national park.”¹³ As described in Chapter 4, Harry Karstens and

On his way to the foothills of the Alaska Range in 1906, Charles Sheldon travelled through the newly-established gold rush settlement of "Eureka." Situated at the confluence of Eureka and Moose Creeks (seen in the foreground, looking south), this town would later be called Kantishna, the most enduring of the Kantishna gold rush settlements. Charles Sheldon, *The Wilderness of Denali*



other park officials did their best to abide by the provision that sanctioned hunting for local prospectors and miners "as may be needed for their actual necessities when short of food." These officials soon discovered, however, that this policy was difficult if not impossible to enforce in the field. By 1923 the National Parks Committee (an outside group headed by George Bird Grinnell) had passed a resolution asking the NPS direc-

tor to prohibit Kantishna-area mining company employees from killing game in the park "for community service." Congress, however, made no move to banish the practice until January 1928. Alaska Delegate Dan Sutherland admitted, at the time, that "there is no prospecting at the present time in the park area." Four months later, President Hoover signed the game-hunting prohibition into law (see Chapter 4).

Eureka Creek, right, was the location of Joe Dalton and Joe Stiles' most important gold discovery in the Kantishna District. This creek turned out to be the major producer for those early miners, who used hand placer mining techniques. L.M. Prindle Collection, #526, U.S. Geological Survey





Joe Quigley's Red Top Mine was a lode claim located above Friday Creek. The Quigley cabin is seen on the far left, and Fannie Quigley's famous garden is visible below the cabin. John Brooks Collection, 68-32-324, University of Alaska Fairbanks Archive

The other significant difference between the Mount McKinley bill and other park bill was its sanction of mining activity. In the bills that created Yellowstone National Park, Yosemite National Park, and the predecessor to today's Sequoia National Park, Congress included a provision for the preservation of all "mineral deposits."¹⁴ The bill establishing Mount Rainier National Park (in 1899) expressly sanctioned the practice, and although a follow-up bill in 1908 prevented the filing of new claims, the presence of existing claims meant that at least some mining-company lands remained within the park until 1984.¹⁵ When a bill to establish Crater Lake National Park was introduced in late 1901, House members favorable to mining interests convinced the sponsor to sanction mining, even though no mining had taken place within the proposed park's boundaries. The bill became law in May 1902. Similarly, the 1906 bill establishing Mesa Verde National Park did not prohibit mining or mineral exploration.¹⁶ The 1916 Organic Act made it clear that the parks' primary purpose was "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects ... therein" and to "leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations," and the 1918 "Lane Letter" stated that "the commercial use of these reservations" except in specified circumstances "will not be permitted under any circumstances." In the years that followed, NPS officials made it clear that mining was one of a number of developments that were considered inappropriate in parks.¹⁷ Even so, three additional park units over the years entered the system with a specific allowance for mining: Grand Canyon National Park (1919), Olympic National Park (1938), and Coronado International Memorial (1941). At three other park units—Glacier Bay National Monument (1925), Death Valley National Monument (1933), and Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument (1937)—rights to mineral entry were reinstated after the units

had been established; Glacier Bay, for example, sanctioned mineral entry as the result of a Congressional act that became law on June 22, 1936.¹⁸

Park Mining, 1917-1941

Beginning in the closing days of World War I, mining in the Kantishna area began a resurgence. Joe Quigley leased out his Little Annie Claim on Quigley Ridge, and shortly afterward he began his own work on the Red Top Claim above Moose Creek. Ed Brooker and Mace Farrar worked the Alpha Claim on Eldorado Creek, and two hydraulic outfits—Kantishna Hydraulic Mining Company and the Mount McKinley Gold Placer Company—worked the gravels of Moose Creek and Caribou Creek, respectively. Most of these operations were active by the summer of 1920; those going to and from Kantishna, during this period, typically arrived from the north or northeast and spent little time in the newly-established park.¹⁹

The Kantishna Hydraulic Company's operations reached well south of its claims, which were located near the Moose Creek-Eureka Creek confluence. In order to create a consistent source of water for the five "giants," or monitors, the company constructed a 2½-mile-long ditch that spanned the distance between Wonder Lake and its claims. This ditch, six feet wide and two feet deep, began at a dam located at the northern end of Wonder Lake. The operation was active in 1922, but it was abandoned soon afterward because of low gold returns. The dam and ditch, including the lake, was several miles north of the park, but in 1932 portions of the company's now-abandoned improvements became parklands because of a Congressional bill that expanded the park's boundaries.²⁰

As noted in Chapter 3, Congress decided to provide funding for the new park in March 1921.

In 1921, Joe and Fannie Quigley were the first to stake lode claims on Copper Mountain, renamed Mt. Eielson in 1930. By 1922 a small camp (seen above) had been established here, with as many as 50 claims staked over the next few years. B94-22-188, Anchorage Museum of History & Art



Shortly afterward, NPS officials hired the first park employee (Harry Karstens), and by June of that year the superintendent was at work in the park. That summer also witnessed some of the first prospecting activity in the park, and by September Karstens wrote to his superiors that “extensive prospecting” had taken place. Between the Thorofare River and the upper slopes of Copper Mountain, Karstens noted that “there is a wonderful lead there and twenty or thirty claims have been staked.” He also noted discoveries “on the upper reaches of the Main Toklat River” and the “headwaters of the Sushana River.” As late as the spring of 1923, Copper Mountain had “quite a number of prospectors and miners ... most of them going in by way of the Kantishna District.”²¹

The 1921 Copper Mountain discoveries, not surprisingly, brought others into the park, many of whom fanned out into areas that had not previously been prospected. In the late fall of 1921, prospectors were seen along the Savage and Sanctuary rivers as well as at Copper Mountain and the Toklat, and the following June, Karstens stated that “numerous prospectors have gone into the park this month, destination unknown.” In April 1923, “quite a number of prospectors” were going to Igloo Creek, and others headed to Slippery Creek at the southwestern end of the park. That summer, there was a stampede into the Toklat Region, but it turned out to be a “false alarm.” By the spring of 1924, the initial prospecting period had apparently run its course, particularly at the park’s eastern end; Karstens spoke with a number of prospectors, who “all agree that there are no mineral deposits east of the Stony,” and that fall Karstens noted that few prospectors had been seen in that area “in very near a year.”²²

Some, however, were reaping rewards from what they had discovered. Perhaps the most substantial operation was being run by Owen M. “Red” Grant, a “bona fide prospector” working at Copper Mountain. Others with Copper Mountain interests included Ed Jern, Wesley Dunkle, and John Anderson; Dunkle, as noted above, had shown an earlier interest in Slippery Creek, while Anderson and his wife (see Chapter 4) ran a homestead at the north end of Wonder Lake.²³ By 1923, Bill Shannon had filed a claim at Slippery Creek; the following year, Neil McCall was hard at work on his Sushana River claim.²⁴

Park officials, during this period, paid particular attention to whether park regulations regarding timber cutting and hunting were being followed. They soon discovered that some prospectors were not cooperative. Karstens noted that a man named Armstrong, who prospected along Savage and Sanctuary rivers, “seems to ignore any authority over the park.”²⁵ Jack Donnelly, who had prospecting camps along the Savage and Toklat rivers, was spotted twice in 1923 with active hunting camps in the park. (As noted in Chapter 4, Karstens warned him after the first incident but cited him after the second; a February 1924 trial was held in Healy but—despite the “clear case” against Donnelly—a local jury exonerated him.)²⁶ And rules against timber cutting were widely violated. In the fall of 1922, Karstens complained that “very nearly every party traveling through [the park] cuts down good trees to make new camps with.” The practice continued into the mid-1920s, when park officials finally stopped it by contacting individual miners and posting public notices in conspicuous areas near where violations had taken place.²⁷

One log structure, the Grant cabin, was built at the Copper Mountain mining camp. The trail through the park passed by this cabin, and most travelers stopped to visit O.M. "Red" Grant, who was known for his hospitality. Edmunds Collection, B91-23-25, Anchorage Museum of History & Art



By the winter of 1925-26, Karstens recognized that a select few in the mining community (which included both Kantishna miners and those working in the park) were "bona fide prospectors" who "abide by all the park rules and regulations" and whose "sympathy is with the Park Service in the preservation of the wild animal life." He ruefully added, however, that "it is only wished that the other prospectors in and around this park were of the same calibre."²⁸ As noted above and in Chapter 4, Karstens at this time was in the midst of a long battle over hunting by prospectors, one that would not be settled until park hunting was banned in 1928.

To learn more about the park's mining activity, Karstens in early 1926 planned to ask "all miners going into the park to record their entry and also advise this office of the location of their claims." It is not known whether he and the other park staff established such a registration system; given the fact that many miners during this period accessed their claims via the northern river systems, gathering such data would have been difficult without a sustained information-collection effort from park rangers. Karstens passed on to his superiors the need for such a system.²⁹

The idea lay fallow for the next several years, but shortly after the hunting ban was enacted, Congress moved to limit mining in the park by prohibiting the filing of any new mining claims and by ensuring that existing claims were used for mining-related purposes. On April 18, 1929 Gerald P. Nye (R-N.D.), who chaired the Senate Committee on Public Lands and Surveys, submitted a bill—probably at the behest of NPS Director Horace M. Albright—that promised to modify operations at seven different national

parks, including Mount McKinley. Section 2 of S. 196, as originally submitted, noted

That hereafter the location of mining claims under the mineral land laws of the United States is prohibited [at the park]; *provided, however*, that this provision shall not affect existing rights heretofore acquired in good faith under the mineral land laws of the United States to any mining location or locations in said Mount McKinley National Park.

Nye held a hearing on the bill in April 1930. Before he did so, however, he solicited Albright's views, and during the intervening period the NPS director backed off from some of the bill's original provisions. Albright, in a March 1930 letter to Interior Secretary Ray Lyman Wilbur, noted that the "desirability of taking this action with reference to the whole of this park" had been "carefully considered by this service and discussed with officials of the Geological Survey." But he now felt that "until more opportunity has been had to exploit the mineral possibilities on the west side of the park, the objects of this provision might be satisfactorily accomplished ... by simply prohibiting the location of mining claims on the east side. The use of mining locations for purposes other than to extract the minerals, however, is undesirable and should not be permitted anywhere in the park." He recommended, therefore, that the above section be modified to prohibit future mining claims only in areas east of Stony Creek and its southward extension, and he recommended that the "good faith" clause in the original bill be replaced by one stating that "mineral

Individual miners pursuing their dreams along many of the creeks in the Kantishna Mining District included Louie Fink, shown above at his cabin in 1919 on Little Moose Creek, on the east side of the Kantishna Hills. These prospectors and miners were far from supply points and by necessity had to be able to build cabins, hunt for their meat, and maintain dog teams for transportation. Stephen Foster Collection, 69-92-270, University of Alaska Fairbanks Archives



locations in the park shall entitle the locator only to the minerals in the land and no surface rights, except such as are reasonably necessary to extract the same, may be acquired by virtue of such location.”

The Senate’s discussion that day led to further changes, and by the time the Committee reported on its work, it decided to recommend that the park establish a registration system rather than an outright prohibition on new mining claims. Section 2 now read as follows:

that hereafter the Secretary of the Interior shall have authority to prescribe regulations for the surface use of any mineral land locations already made or that may hereafter be made within the [park] boundaries ... and he may require registration of all prospectors and miners who enter the park: provided, That no resident of the United States who is qualified under the mining laws of the United States applicable to Alaska shall be denied entrance to the park for the purpose of prospecting or mining.

Given the Senate committee’s changes, no further action took place on Section 2 of S. 196. It passed the Senate on May 7, 1930; it was reported out of the House the following January 21, and President Hoover signed the so-called Surface Use Act on January 26, 1931.³⁰ By the time the bill became law, however, mining activity in the park had ebbed. Perhaps because NPS officials were not particularly worried about the effects of mining activity, they made no immediate moves to implement the registration system called for in the statute.

During the late 1920s and early 1930s, little mining or prospecting took place in Mount McKinley National Park. The Copper Mountain, Slippery Creek, Sushana River and other former activity sites were generally quiet, and the Kantishna area just outside of the park boundary was far less active than it had been during the years immediately after World War I. As historian Bill Brown has noted, “By early depression days the population of the Kantishna district and surrounding mining areas had dwindled to less than 20 souls. In 1930 only two miners wintered over at Eureka. ... This was a far cry from the distant days of stampede—a cabin or two with smoke in the pipe, the rest falling and smothered with alders.” A minor amount of work, outside the park, was also taking place during this period on Crooked Creek, on the east flank of the Kantishna Hills a few miles west of the Toklat River.³¹

One of the few minerals to be extracted in the park during this period was coal. By 1931, NPS rangers had become aware of a coal seam located just east of the Toklat River’s East Fork. Until this time, NPS rangers had relied on wood to heat their cabins along both the park road and the northern boundary. Many of their cabins west of the Teklanika River drainage, however, did not have an adequate nearby wood supply, and as a result, rangers were forced to haul wood for a considerable distance. To ease the problem, NPS rangers—probably working in concert with better-equipped ARC personnel—mined “several loads of coal” during the summer of 1931. They then hauled the coal over the newly-constructed road to one of the Toklat River ranger cabins, after which it was to be distributed to several NPS cabins along the park’s northern boundary line. Two years later, the Alaska Road

The East Fork coal mine was located less than a mile up the small creek drainage toward Sable Pass from the Alaska Road Commission's East Fork cabin. This mine had a section of narrow gauge railroad track and a tipping car for transporting the coal. Ickes Collection, B75-175-306, Anchorage Museum of History & Art



Commission showed an interest in the seam as well, and that August, several additional loads were mined and “hailed to some of the cabins where wood is not available.”³² Activity at the site eventually included a short railroad track and coal car; production continued at least until 1934. Three years later, the mine was reactivated and 45 tons of coal was extracted there. The park concessioner, the Mount McKinley Tourist and Transportation Company, probably did so to heat its Camp Denali buildings, located at Mile 66 on the park road.³³ After the 1939 season, park officials learned that coal mining there (and elsewhere in the park) was prohibited. Despite that news, however, NPS rangers in September 1940 hauled coal (perhaps a previously-mined deposit) from the East Fork mine to the newly-constructed Wonder Lake Ranger Station. No known mining has taken place at the site since then.³⁴

Kantishna Mining and the NPS, 1937-1945

As noted in Volume 1, the park road that was begun in 1923 was completed to Wonder Lake in 1936, to the northern park boundary in 1937, and to its terminus in Kantishna in 1938. In anticipation of the road's completion, and in response to higher gold prices, the Kantishna district (in the words of historian Ann Kain)

moved into a boom period. Several mills were constructed to process the ores from lode mines, and placer mining moved into a new phase with the introduction of new equipment. As

a result, over the next few years, the Kantishna District produced more gold, both lode and placer, than at any earlier time.³⁵

The first to take advantage of the area's easier access was General A. D. McRae of Vancouver, B.C. In the summer of 1933—several years before the road's completion—he took an option on Joe and Fannie Quigley's Red Top and Little Annie properties. That September, the concessioner hauled 50 tons of freight to the end of the road (which was Mile 70 at that time), beyond which the ARC agreed to use caterpillars to complete the haul. A two-man crew drilled a 1,000-foot tunnel at the Little Annie Mine, only to discover that the ore samples were too low-grade to be profitable. Soon afterward, the option was dropped.³⁶ The January 1934 near-doubling of the price of gold (from \$20.67 to \$35 per ounce) brought new investors into the Kantishna area, and in 1935 the Quigleys leased the Banjo gold claim to Ernest Fransen and Clifton Hawkins, two longtime Fairbanks-area “hard rock men.” These men, together with Fairbanks businessman A. Hjalmar Nordale, formed the Red Top Mining Company; they purchased several more of the Quigley properties. Their operations, together with those of the Caribou Mines (a dry-land dredging operation on Caribou Creek) brought forth the “Golden Years of Kantishna Mining,” which lasted from 1937 to 1942.³⁷

The increased value of gold encouraged mineral development throughout Alaska. Within the na-

The Banjo Mill, pictured here in 1939, was located on the east end of Quigley Ridge on the Banjo claim, and was the first attempt to mill lode gold locally in the Kantishna District. The six-level mill was built in 1937-38 and was operated by the Red Top Mining Company from 1939 to 1942. Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-18-121, Alaska State Library



tional park, however, the only new development site was at Slippery Creek, which was some 25 miles southwest of Kantishna. As noted above, Bill Shannon had established claims in the area in 1923, but major development work awaited the arrival of Wesley Dunkle. The man known as “Alaska’s Flying Miner” took an option on the property in 1936 and, with help from the Anaconda Company, sent a crew out in the early spring of 1937. The mine attracted considerable attention until poor metallurgical tests forced Dunkle, late in 1937, to write the project off as a bad investment.³⁸

The renewed interest in gold mining during the late 1930s had a second impact on the park because it brought increased traffic to the

park road. The park’s leaders were doubtless aware that the road had been built to access the Kantishna mines as well as to areas of pre-eminent scenic vistas and wildlife habitat. At first, park leaders saw few conflicts regarding the dual purpose of the park road (only that “trucks of the Kantishna mines ... were pulled out of ditches several times” one summer).³⁹

Just two years after the road was completed, NPS officials broached the idea of charging fees for commercial vehicle traffic on the park road. Previous regulations had made no requirements for either motor vehicle permits or motor vehicle fees, but in April 1940, the agency’s General Rules and Regulations (Section 2.40) were amended to read “Where required, no motor

The Carrington Company’s introduction of large-scale, mechanized mining technology in 1939 brought an end to small-scale mining methods on Caribou Creek. The dryland dredge, shown above in 1939, was operated until 1942. Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-18-138, Alaska State Library





Park managers and Alaska Road Commission personnel were well acquainted with the Kantishna District's residents, as evidenced by this 1931 photo taken at the Quigley cabin on Friday Creek. Pictured from left to right are Joe Quigley, Betty Edmunds (wife of ARC foreman Chris Edmunds), Fannie Quigley and park superintendent Harry Liek. DENA 3831, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

vehicle may be operated in the parks or monuments without a permit. ... Permits are issued upon payment of the required fee.⁴⁰ After Washington officials apprised him of the new rule, Superintendent Been railed against it; he stated that "As privately owned passenger vehicles are used so seldom and the trucking now done by the Kantishna mine operators is not a problem, it appears desirable to refrain from requiring permits. ... The bus trips of the park operator function quite closely to a schedule and present no serious problem to date." Been asked NPS Director Arno Cammerer to include Mount McKinley as an exception to the general regulation.⁴¹

Washington officials, in response, mulled over the idea for almost a year. In March 1941, the agency issued new regulations, and although Section 2.40 was left largely intact, they made no move to require either permits or fees for all vehicles on the park road. But the same regulation package had a newly-reworded portion (Section 2.37) that dealt with commercial trucks. It stated that the use of any park road "by commercial

trucks, when such trucking is in no way connected with the operation of the park or monument, is prohibited, except that in special cases trucking permits may be issued at the discretion of the Director, for which a special fee will be charged."⁴² Given the fact that commercial truck traffic over the Mount McKinley park road, by this time, was an accomplished fact, NPS officials had little choice but to grant permits to Kantishna mining companies and to charge a fee for the companies' use of the park road. Park employees, in June 1941, reacted to Washington's ruling by recommending an annual \$5 fee for 1½-ton trucks and a \$10 fee for 2½- and 3-ton trucks. But the two Kantishna-area mining companies (Red Top Mining Co. and Carrington Company/Caribou Mines) fought the proposed fee and, citing low profits, aired their grievance to Alaska Delegate Anthony Dimond. This action effectively postponed an agency decision on the matter, but by March 1942, the NPS had overcome those objections. Been, in his monthly report, noted that "special permits were issued to two gold mining companies to use the park highway for truck freighting of mine supplies and equipment.

Johnny Busia posed for this photograph at his Neversweat lode claim on Eldorado Creek. Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



This is the first time that a fee has been charged for commercial use of the road.⁴³

The onset of World War II—had a varied impact on the mining industry, both in the park vicinity and elsewhere in Alaska. The War Production Board's issuance of Limitation Order L-208 on October 8, 1942 forced the closure of most nonessential gold mines in the United States, including those at Kantishna. But the war also brought about a relaxation on regulations (in place since the passage of the 1872 mining law) that required miners to perform \$100 worth of annual assessment work on their claims.⁴⁴ The war also created a renewed demand for many minerals because of their strategic value, and by September 1942 park authorities were announcing that “the park highway may become an artery for [the] flow of strategic metals.” Ernest Maurer, from Fairbanks, began production that fall on an antimony mine along Slate Creek (at the southwestern end of the Kantishna Hills) and hauled ore over the park road in both 1943 and 1944.⁴⁵ Earl Pilgrim, at Stampede Mine in the Toklat River drainage (see below), ran a much larger antimony mine but did not use the park road, and Owen M. Grant optioned his Copper Mountain lead-zinc property—“the only mine in the park in which assessment is kept up,” as of September 1942—to a Canadian company that inspected the site's ore body but ultimately decided to not develop it.⁴⁶

In the midst of the new whirlwind of economic activity, several small, long-time prospectors soldiered on at claims that had been worked for

a generation or more. Joe Dalton, who had been prospecting in the area since 1904, continued to reside along Moose Creek; Fannie Quigley lived nearby, as she had since 1906; and Croatian-born “Little Johnny” Busia, who moved to the Kantishna in 1918, continued to trap and prospect from his Moose Creek cabin. Given the easier accessibility that the park road provided, groups of tourists and even dignitaries occasionally dropped in on the aging residents.⁴⁷ Park rangers did, too; Grant Pearson, who had met Quigley shortly after his park tenure began in 1926, told a host of stories about her, and he used a trail built in the early 1920s—and still used today—that wound north from the Kantishna Ranger Station (McKinley Bar cabin) toward the Kantishna district. Pearson was also fond of Busia, whom he interviewed in 1943. Pearson and other park staff were saddened indeed to hear about Dalton's death in April 1944 and Quigley's four months later; thereafter, park personnel dubbed Busia the “mayor” of Kantishna and did what they could to assist him.⁴⁸

Mining in Kantishna and the Park, 1945-1975

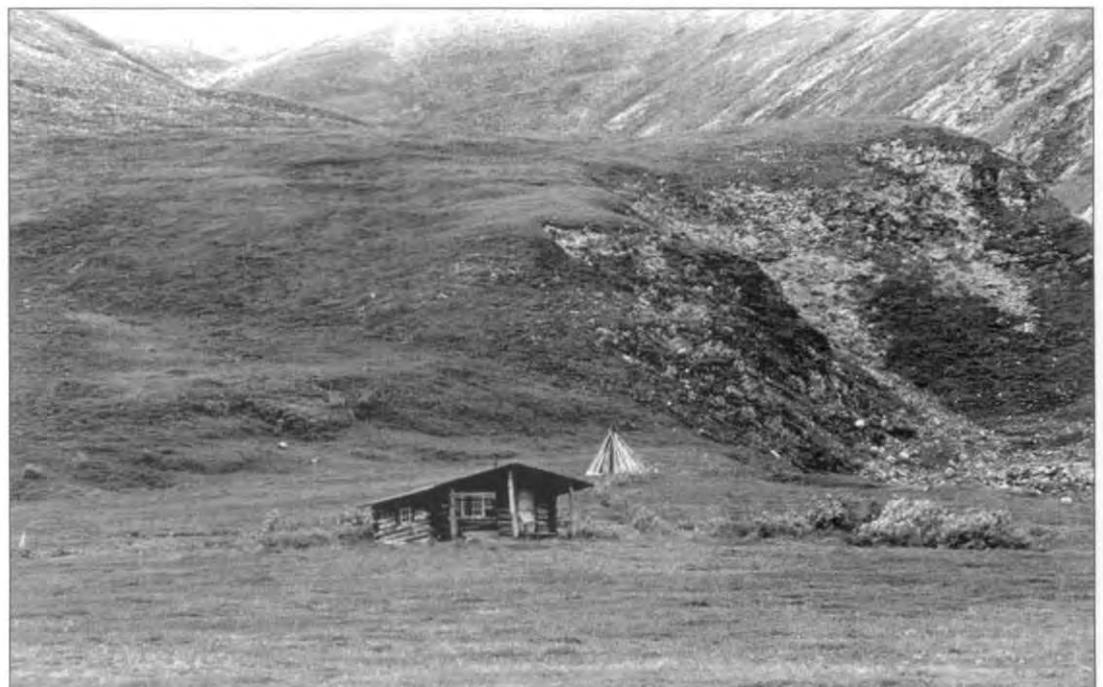
After World War II, some commercial mining took place on the park's margins; the largest lode mine in the area was the Stampede Mine (see next section), but in addition, Frank Bunnell operated the Neversweat lead-silver prospect near the confluence of Eldorado and Reinhart creeks. Bunnell worked the prospect, which had previously been Johnny Busia's, off and on between the late 1950s and the late 1960s, but it produced only a marginal amount of ore.⁴⁹

Harold Herning, a former park ranger, began developing his Mt. Eielson mining claims in 1954 by hauling a pre-built log cabin to the former Copper Mountain mining camp site. Part of his road can be seen above the Thorofare River bar and to the right of the prominent drainage on Mt. Eielson. DENA 16-17, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



More numerous were gold placer operations, which cropped up in various Kantishna Hills locations during this thirty-year period. Johnny Busia, for example, ran a “shovel-in” operation along Moose Creek during the late 1940s.⁵⁰ The largest commercial venture during this period was the Caribou Mines. This 14-man operation was run by the Carrington Company of Seattle and operated on Caribou Creek from 1946 to 1949; its equipment was then used by the Glacier Creek Mining Company, which operated during the 1949 season. Other operations were smaller,

with crews of six or less. They included the Hosler Mines, on Moose and Eureka creeks, run by Elmer and D. G. Hosler between 1948 and 1952; Dewey Burnette and Martha (Margaret) Hunter, who operated on Crooked Creek between 1947 and 1956; Paul Omlin, who had a one-man operation on Little Moose Creek in 1955 and 1956; Arley Taylor and Associates, who operated on Eureka Creek beginning in 1959 and perhaps as late as 1966; the Stuver Brothers, who operated on Moose Creek during the 1961 season; George Blackman and A. H. Dyer, who operated on



Harold Herning's cabin on Mt. Eielson, pictured here in the 1960s, was built next to the remains of the former Grant cabin at the Copper Mountain mining camp. Cultural Resource Files, Denali National Park and Preserve



Johnny Busia, seen above in 1947, used hand placer mining methods. He lived in Kantishna from 1918 until his death there in 1957. Oscar Dick Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

Friday Creek between 1961 and 1963; the Glen Creek Development Company, which was active on Glen Creek during the 1960s.⁵¹ Most of these were mechanized operations in which a dragline or bulldozer (perhaps both) were used to gather and process the gold ore.

During this thirty-year period, the only known commercial mining that took place in the park consisted of a small amount of building-stone extraction during the early-to-mid 1950s and a small amount of antimony mining during the mid-1970s.⁵² A few others tried to develop their property, but without commercial success. Perhaps the most visible mining operation was that of Harold Herning, who, according to a July 1954 NPS report, “improved the old road from the highway to the Thorofare River gravel flats and ... hauled in logs with which to erect a cabin.” Herning, who had filed on a series of claims in June, built the cabin and an adjacent wall tent later that summer; he accessed his cabin and nearby claims with a “truck and halftrack.” Members of his family returned to the site for more than twenty years. Portions of his access route are still visible today, and his cabin has long been an object of interest to those who have enjoyed the view from Eielson Visitor Center, just two miles to the north.⁵³

Most miners during this period (those with claims either in the park or in the Kantishna area) had a number of interactions with the NPS; they often met park staff while driving out the park road, and paperwork was needed to gain road access or to obtain a prospector’s permit. Existing records indicate that the NPS, following Congress’s lead (see above), did not charge commercial mining companies for their use of the road between 1943 and 1949, inclusive. In 1950, the agency assessed two mining companies a \$20 annual fee.⁵⁴ But by 1952 (and perhaps by 1951) the fee had apparently been waived, and the NPS did not assess road-use fees to miners in later years.⁵⁵ The miner with the most extensive NPS contacts during this period was Johnny Busia, who seldom if ever used the park road. By the late 1940s, the lone sourdough was a well-known figure, both locally and throughout Alaska, and NPS staff stayed in contact with him by radio throughout the year via periodic weather and wildlife reports.⁵⁶ Busia died on August 20, 1957, just two weeks after the Denali Highway made Kantishna easily accessible to the motoring public.⁵⁷

In 1931, it may be recalled, Congress had given the Interior Secretary (and, by extension, park officials) the “authority to prescribe regulations

for the surface use of any mineral land locations already made or that may hereafter be made” in the park and also the authority to “require registration of all prospectors and miners who enter the park.” Because of a lack of mining activity, no moves were made during the 1930s to establish park-specific mineral regulations. This near-total absence of mining activity continued during the postwar years. As noted in the sections below, there were three major proposed or existing mining developments that consumed NPS officials’ attention during the postwar period. Given those developments, the NPS—consistent with overall agency goals—did what it could to prevent a resurgence of mining exploration and development. It first moved to establish an area where the mining laws would not be applied, and then expanded the number and size of these areas, as needed.

The first proposed large-scale mining development emerged shortly after World War II. In August 1947 (see below), NPS officials became aware of the potential economic value of a large limestone deposit just east of Little Windy Creek, near the southeastern corner of the park, and in October 1948, development interests staked five claims in that area. Hoping to protect the surrounding area, the NPS withdrew approximately 6,200 acres of surrounding land in December 1948, and in order to prevent speculative mining development, the Interior Secretary implemented park mining regulations in February 1949 that required registration, an annual prospector’s permit, and other provisions. In February 1951 the withdrawn area was increased to approximately 119,000 acres; seven years later, in June 1958, the withdrawal was revoked. The regulations that were implemented in February 1949 remained in effect until 1976, when Congressional passage of the Mining in the Parks Act eliminated future mineral entry in the park.⁵⁸

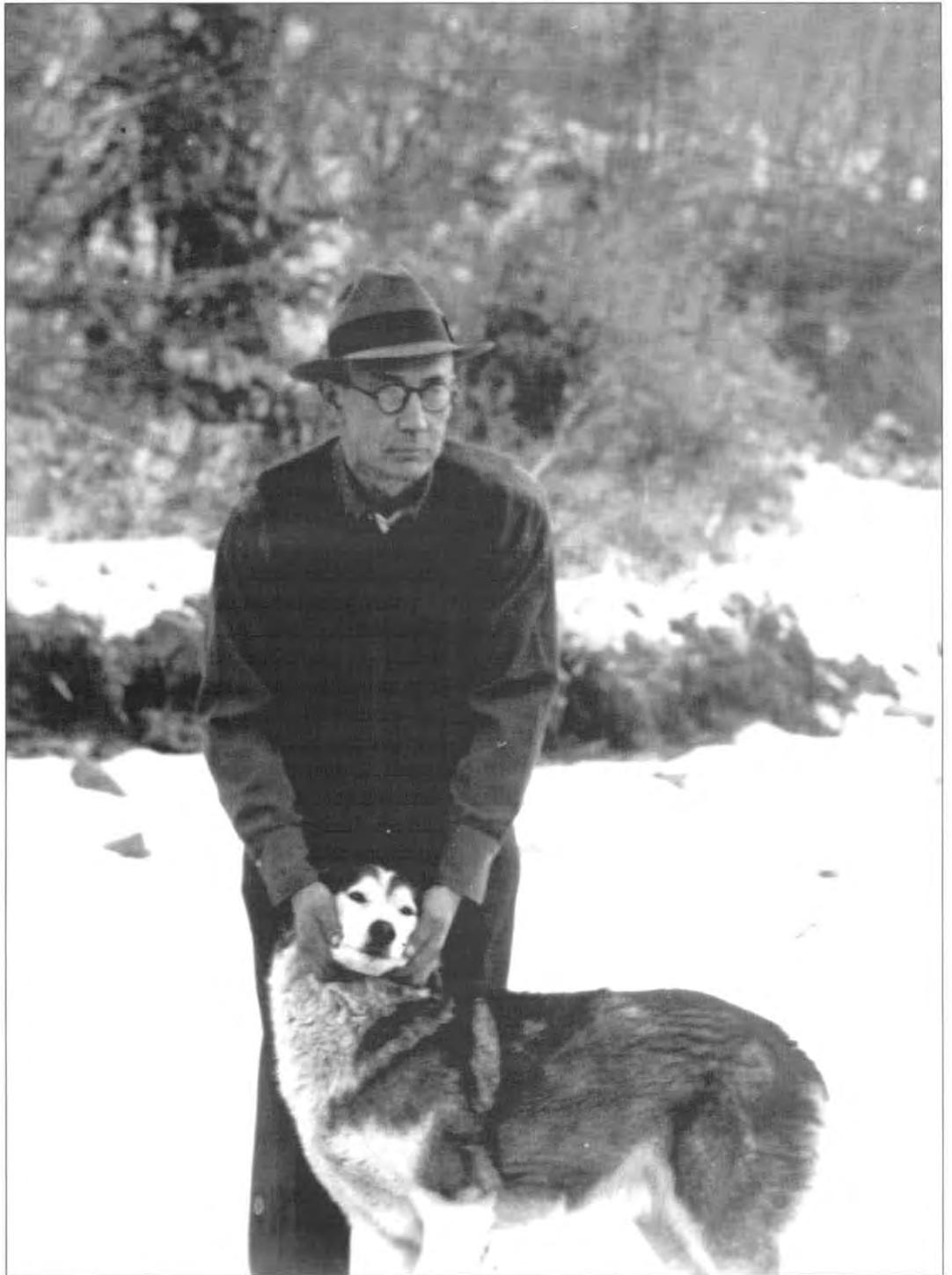
In 1952, a corporation’s attempts to extract building stone from the park (see below) brought forth two proposals to withdraw a cumulative total of approximately 81,050 acres of land along the park road. Those proposals, which called for large amounts of land to be withdrawn in the hotel-headquarters and Wonder Lake areas but a narrower corridor between those areas, were advanced in August and September 1952 but never implemented. But by May 1957, the near-completion of the Denali Highway had brought forth a revival of interest in the park by prospectors and miners. Superintendent Duane Jacobs, at first, denied permits to several individuals, but to ensure greater protection, he requested the issuance of a public land order that would preclude mining and prospecting within 1.5 miles

of the park road. (At that time, he apparently was unaware of the 1952 proposals.) He was soon assured, however, to learn that a “request for withdrawal of lands adjacent to the park road ... is in effect” even though his request had not yet been processed. Shortly afterward, on June 4, the Interior Department inserted a proposal in the *Federal Register* to withdraw the same road-corridor parcels that had been attempted five years earlier.⁵⁹ Almost a year later, in early May 1958, the Department announced that it would finalize the withdrawal. On June 28, 1958, the Interior Secretary’s office issued a public land order stating that 81,050 acres along the park road corridor was being reserved for “administrative sites and the protection and preservation of scenic and recreational areas,” and to accomplish those purposes the acreage was “withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the public-land laws, including the mining laws.”⁶⁰

Earl Pilgrim and the Stampede Mine

Sometime before World War I (see above), prospectors located a promising body of stibnite (antimony ore) along Stampede Creek, a tributary of the Clearwater Fork near its confluence with the Toklat River. Except for excavating an open cut, however, no one tried to develop the property commercially for more than twenty years.⁶¹ In 1936, however, longtime Alaska resident Earl R. Pilgrim obtained the claims and transferred them to Morris P. Kirk and Son, Inc., a National Lead Company subsidiary. Pilgrim himself signed on as the company’s on-site manager. Given the larger company’s muscle, it constructed a ball mill in 1939. Before long the mine was the largest antimony producer in Alaska and second largest in the country. By the spring of 1941, when high costs forced the mine’s closure, more than 2,500 tons of ore and concentrates had made their way to the Alaska Railroad and to more distant processing facilities. At first, the company had used a Caterpillar tractor and double-ender sleds to haul its ores out during the late winter months; from the mine, goods went eastward to the Lignite railroad stop over a sinuous route that was similar to the “lower route” that Alaska Road Commission personnel had surveyed during the early 1920s (see Chapter 3).⁶² By the summer of 1941, however, Pilgrim had added another transportation option by blading out an airstrip 2½ miles downstream from the mine, at the Stampede Creek-Clearwater Fork confluence.⁶³ Neither of these transportation methods trespassed on Park Service property, so perhaps as a result, park officials knew little during this period about the nature and scope of Pilgrim’s activities.

In the spring of 1942, Pilgrim bought the mine and mill complex and, given a spike in antimony



Earl Pilgrim and his beloved dog, Kobuk, are pictured here in the late 1930s at the Stampede Mine. Pilgrim was a mining engineer who played an active role in the Stampede Creek antimony claims from the 1930s through the 1970s. Sarah Isto Collection

prices, he immediately set to work reopening the mine. Perhaps using his years of experience as a mining engineer, Pilgrim was able to persuade both the U.S. Bureau of Mines and the U.S. Geological Survey to send technical crews out to the property that year. These crews doubtless helped steer Pilgrim toward promising new ore bodies.⁶⁴

Recognizing the prevailing high transportation costs, the war emergency, and the need to expeditiously get this strategic ore to market, Pilgrim petitioned the ARC for authorization to build a

“tractor-trailer wagon and truck road” from the mine to where the park road bridged the Toklat River. Pilgrim offered two routes: a 26½-mile option that lay entirely within the Clearwater Fork and Toklat River beds, and a 20½-mile option that included a three-mile cross-country segment spanning the low divide between these two drainages. Park superintendent Frank Been, upon receiving the request, rejected the shorter route because it would “require construction overland on park lands,” but he cautiously supported the 26½-mile proposal. He recognized that “the wide gravel beds of Alaskan glacier

Transportation of antimony ore from the remote Stampede Mine to market was a major difficulty. This late 1930s or early 1940s photograph shows tractor trains pulling wanigans and largely empty sleds. The tractor trains are presumably headed back to Stampede from the Alaska Railroad at Lignite, where ore was unloaded for shipment. Sarah Isto Collection

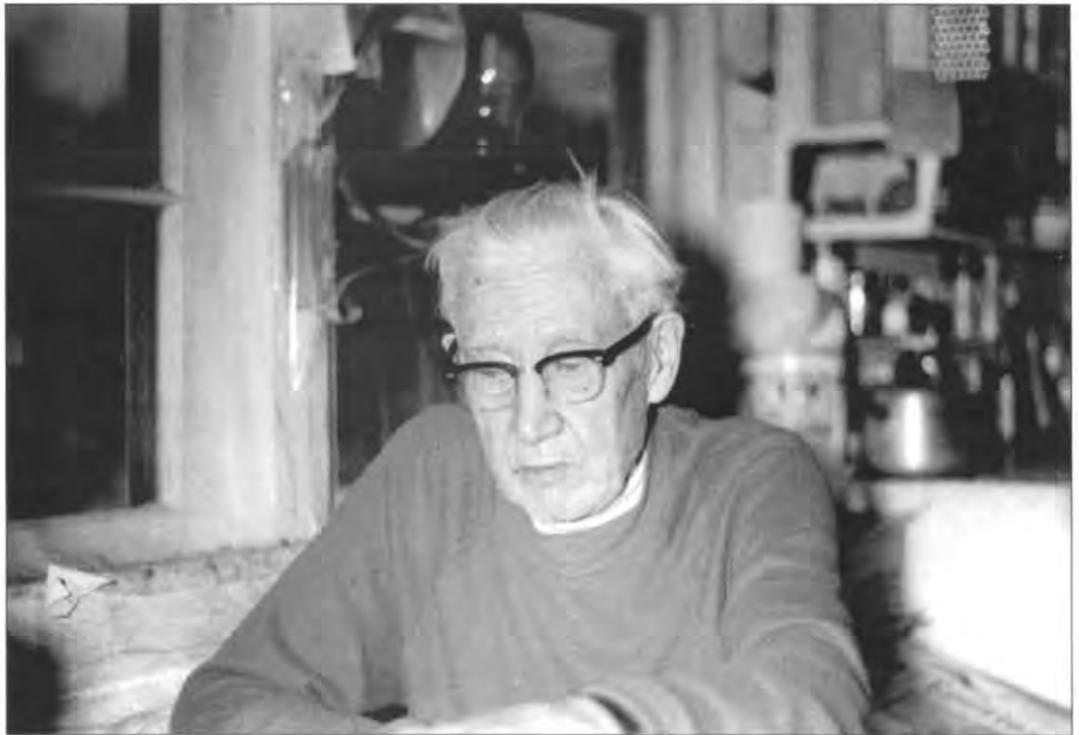


streams are commonly used for trucking and tractor hauling,” and more specific to Pilgrim’s letter, he stated that “the meandering nature of the Toklat River will erase the road from the gravel stream bed within a year or two after hauling ceases.” Inasmuch as Pilgrim had purportedly opened the mine “solely as war production work,” Been was willing to authorize the road, but “only for the war emergency.” Been’s recommendation was quickly seconded by NPS Director Newton Drury.⁶⁵ Pilgrim, however, did not follow through on the proposed road, and he abandoned the idea in 1944.

In 1946, Pilgrim optioned the property to other investors, and in May 1948 the mine’s new managers requested permission from the NPS to construct an “ore trucking road” connecting the mine with the park road. This request called for the shorter road option, in which several miles of right-of-way strayed away from riverbeds. NPS officials at the Washington level were initially favorable to the idea. But because the operators were purportedly “involved in shady financing,” Superintendent Been was less enthusiastic about it and recommended that the Bureau of Mines decide whether the ore body could be profitably

This early 1970s photograph shows the Stampede Mine’s lower camp. The buildings, left to right, are the garage/shop, the “covered warehouse”, cache, house and office, and the greenhouse with a weather station in front of it. Not shown are the bunkhouse and mess house at the upper camp, and the warehouse, dynamite shed and assay office slightly downstream. Sarah Isto Collection





Earl Pilgrim is pictured here in his Stampede Mine home and office cabin in 1976, at the age of 84. Linda S. Barb Collection

developed. This road request eventually reached the Alaska Road Commission; it was not acted upon because the ARC, given its meager budget, was unable to carry out the work.⁶⁶

In 1954, Pilgrim revived his interest in the mine after obtaining a Defense Minerals Exploration Agency contract, and as part of that effort he renewed the proposal—first advanced in 1942 and renewed in the late 1940s—to build a 20½-mile road from the mine to the Toklat River bridge. In mid-July, NPS officials flew over the proposed route, and shortly afterward they discussed the road project with Pilgrim. Superintendent Grant Pearson, who by this time had worked with Pilgrim for years, saw advantages to the road; as historian Bill Brown noted, the road would not mar scenery near the park road, and it would give the park vehicular access to the park's Lower Toklat Patrol Cabin, which would considerably ease supplying this and other boundary cabins. Pearson's support proved crucial, and within a month Washington officials had also approved the route. But the following year, park officials decided to be more cautious, and the special use permit that Pilgrim signed in early 1955 granted authorization to use the longer (26½-mile) route that remained within the park's riverbeds. The ARC, again, was unable to fund the necessary road improvements, and the project lapsed.⁶⁷

Pilgrim again produced ore at the mine in 1956 and 1957. In 1956, he made two ore shipments out to the railroad, both via tractor train over the route that he had pioneered in the 1930s.⁶⁸

Perhaps because of the toil and expense of those trips, he made a renewed attempt in late 1957 to obtain a connecting road along the Toklat River corridor. Since receiving his previous approval, however, the park had undergone significant changes: Superintendent Pearson had retired and been replaced by Duane Jacobs, the park (and the entire agency) had proposed and approved its Mission 66 plans, the Denali Highway had been completed and brought thousands of new visitors to the park, and conservationists had caught wind of the road project and openly disapproved of it. Given those changes, a park official informed Pilgrim that the proposed road was no longer compatible with park values. Pilgrim met with Jacobs the following spring and stressed the NPS's hypocrisy in opposing a road that had been granted three previous times. Jacobs, in response, openly worried that the approval of a temporary, ad hoc road would soon mushroom into the need for an improved, permanent road. He relayed his concerns to his superiors in San Francisco and Washington, who showed no inclination to disagree with the superintendent's decision or rationale.⁶⁹

Lacking the Toklat option, Pilgrim now tried to interest officials with the new State of Alaska in improving the old route that connected the mine with the Alaska Railroad stop at Lignite. (See Chapter 9.) Seizing on the provisions of the Pioneer Access Road Act of 1959 and its 1960 amendments, Pilgrim contacted state Department of Natural Resources officials in May 1960. His request eventually reached Division of Highways officials, who supported the project not

After World War II there was high demand for cement in the territory of Alaska. To assist with mineral evaluation, the Bureau of Mines investigated limestone claims along the Alaska Railroad corridor in an area just west of the Windy railroad stop. This July 1950 photograph shows one of the drilling sites. DENA 16-6, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



only on its own merits but because it portended possible future routes to Kantishna and even McGrath. That November, Yutan Construction Co. of Fairbanks submitted a low bid of \$250,000 to build a road between Lignite and Stampede, and the work was declared to be complete in October 1961.⁷⁰ The route was laid out so poorly that the only round trip by a four-wheel-drive vehicle was one accomplished by the project inspector. Despite the mine's continuing access problems, however, Pilgrim continued to produce antimony ore during this period, in 1964-65 and again in 1969-70.⁷¹

Plans to Mine Limestone Along Windy Creek

A second area of mining-related concern during this period pertained to the potential development of limestone claims in the southeastern corner of Mount McKinley National Park. Since the early 1930s, geologists had known that the Cantwell area had contained limestone deposits; what remained unknown, however, was "whether or not the larger or better deposits [of those all along the Alaska Railroad corridor] were in the Park."⁷² To find out more, members of the U.S. Army did some investigating in 1946 in the area immediately west of the Windy section camp. That interest, in turn, brought a U.S. Geological Survey field party to the area the following summer. An NPS ranger spotted the USGS crew along Windy Creek on August 3, and five days later its leader, Edward Cobb, briefed Superintendent Frank Been on the matter.⁷³

Been soon learned that the crew's presence portended major changes for the park. In the

wake of World War II, the demand for cement was far higher than it had been in previous years, and in response to that demand, territorial leaders did what they could to push for the establishment of a cement plant along the Railbelt. The U.S. Geological Survey's field party was a technical response to those plans, the purpose of which was to search for economic deposits of limestone, clay and coal within fifty miles of the Alaska Railroad. At the August 8 meeting, Been was surprised to learn that the park's limestone deposits were of special interest because no other limestone deposits had yet been identified in the railroad belt; and because promising clay deposits had already been located in the Healy-Suntrana area, Cobb told Been that "a cement plant might be feasible near Healy or Cantwell." Soon afterward, Cobb's superior confirmed his agency's interest in the park; he noted that "the studies apparently are now focused close to the railroad just inside the southern Park boundary. The area being investigated is small, a few square miles at most, and the studies include geologic appraisal of the deposits as well as the topographic mapping on a large scale of the vicinity of the better deposits."⁷⁴

The USGS investigations set in motion a series of events that involved NPS, Interior Department, and territorial officials as well as the U.S. Congress for the next several years. Historian Claus-M. Naske has provided an excellent overview of this proposal, which readers seeking a detailed account are invited to read.⁷⁵ As it pertained to NPS interests, however, the primary question was whether limestone-development advocates



The purpose of the Bureau of Mines investigation was to determine the economic viability of limestone deposits near the railroad. DENA 16-8, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

would be able to gain access to the park; and if so, how the NPS would respond.

By late August of 1948, two different companies had told the Interior Department of their interest in building a cement plant in Alaska. One of those companies, the Northern Empire Development Company of Anchorage, asked the department for permission to obtain the park's limestone deposits. The company's president, Arthur E. Beaudin, told Interior Secretary Julius "Cap" Krug that he had investigated several possible limestone deposits, but the park offered both limestone and clay deposits that were "associated in a sufficiently reasonable manner to encourage the hazards of a business venture." Interior Department officials, by this time, knew that project developers hoped to establish a cement plant adjacent to the railroad in the vicinity of the limestone deposits. They were also well aware that agencies within the department differed on the wisdom of further development; the NPS, given the choice, wanted "to protect the area from commercial use," but the Alaska Railroad, the Geological Survey, the Bureau of Mines and the newly-established Alaska Field Committee all advocated resource development. Assistant Interior Secretary William Warne,

trying to steer a middle course, was concerned about possible encroachments on the park, and inquired about "limestone areas outside the park which might be comparably abundant and advantageously located." He also learned—based on the January 1931 law noted above—"of the Secretary's authority to prescribe regulations for mining even though mining is permitted."⁷⁶

To resolve the issue, a meeting was held on September 5 between Assistant Interior Secretary C. Girard Davidson and representatives of the NPS, Alaska Railroad, and Bureau of Mines. As a result of that meeting, Davidson learned that no comparable limestone areas existed within the railbelt; perhaps as a result, he authorized the Bureau of Mines to drill "two horizontal cores at the base of the limestone ridge" which was located "several miles inside the park."⁷⁷ NPS Director Newton Drury also telegraphed his approval of the drilling plan, and by mid-September a Bureau of Mines crew had begun its work at the site. On October 9, in the midst of those efforts, three Beaudin employees flew to the area and staked five twenty-acre limestone claims within the park boundaries. These claims were located "near the left limit of Windy Creek about one mile north and near mile 324 on The Alaska Railroad."⁷⁸

Interior Department officials, in response to the claims, took a hard protectionist line. Secretary Julius Krug noted that “it is my firm policy to prohibit any and all commercial mining operations within the Park boundaries unless overwhelming evidence can be presented to indicate that the proper development of Alaska would require mining the [park] resources. No evidence has been presented to this end...”⁷⁹ To further protect the area, they made two additional moves. The first was to take steps to implement the mining regulations that had been authorized back in January 1931, and the second was to withdraw a large area surrounding the five claims from further mining activity:

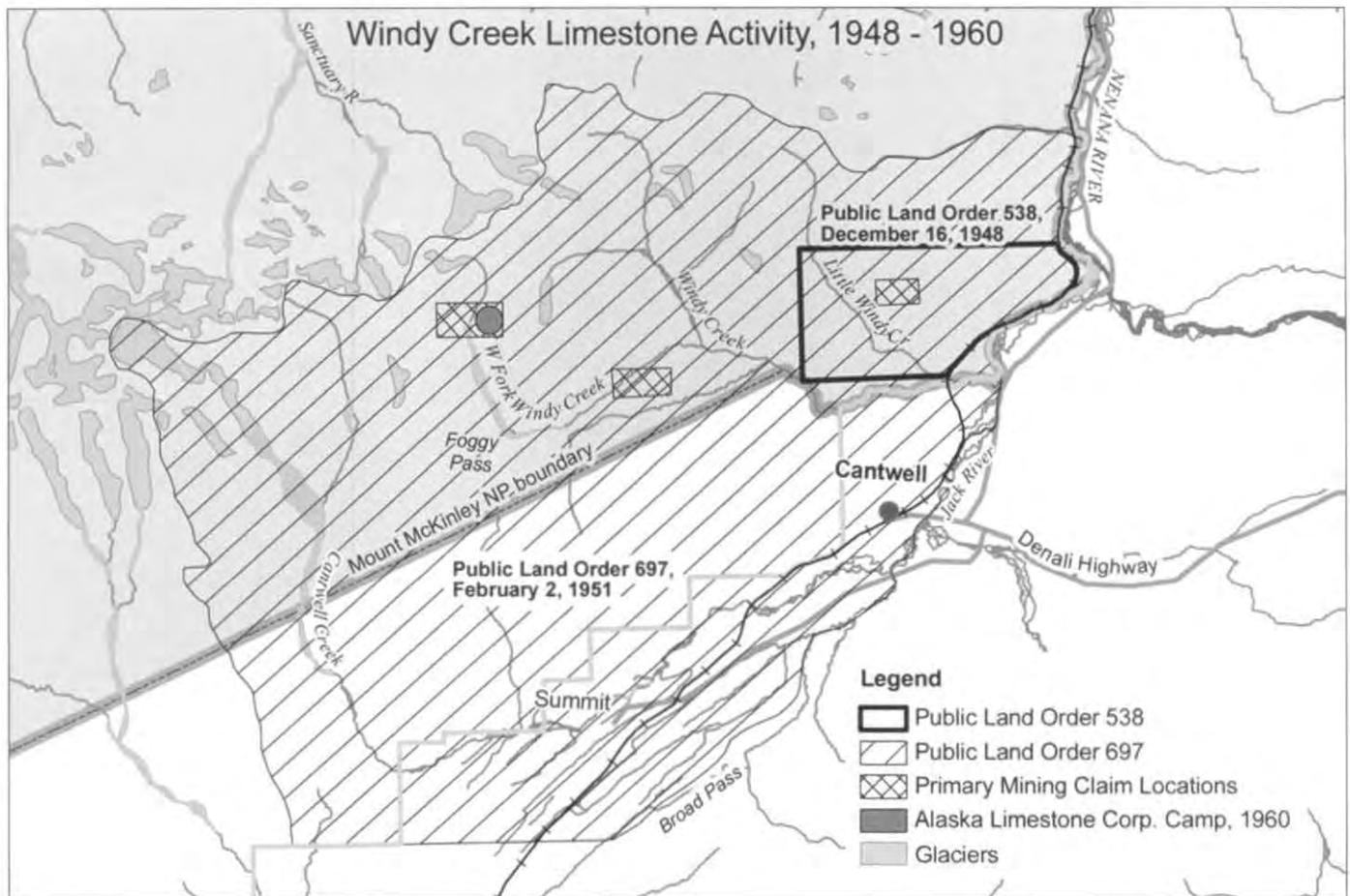
The move to establish mining regulations in the park, noted as an option during a mid-August meeting (see above), began in earnest during discussions of a subcommittee of the Alaska Field Committee, the purpose of which was “to examine the law relating to mining in the park.” The group, in its October 8, 1948 report, reiterated that the Interior Secretary, if desired, “could issue special regulations governing [prospecting] activities in the Park but as yet has not done so.” When the Committee discussed the proposed development at its October 8 meeting, it expressed “considerable concern ... over the possibility that claims may be staked on the deposit by unscrupulous persons, thereby permitting them to maintain a monopoly control over any future cement industry in Alaska.”⁸⁰

Ten days after the committee met, Assistant Interior Secretary William Warne recommended that the NPS “draft an appropriate Secretarial order” that would 1) reaffirm the applicability of the mining laws within the park, but 2) provide the authority to require registration for all prospectors who enter the park and to prescribe mining-related regulations. The committee’s director, Kenneth Kadow, wrote Warne soon afterward; he summarized the committee’s recent discussion on the matter and recommended “that the regulations should do everything in their power to facilitate practical development.” A regional NPS official, however, worried that “many strategically located mineral deposits within the park will be filed upon, proved up on, and go to patent for purposes other than mining.” He therefore recommended that language contained in the 1936 Congressional act (which had opened Glacier Bay National Monument to mining) be applied to Mount McKinley National Park. On November 26, NPS Director Drury forwarded language for the proposed regulation to Secretary Krug.⁸¹ Two weeks later, however, Supt. Been weighed in and strongly supported an annual registration requirement for prospectors

and miners. Based on these and other comments, NPS personnel revised the regulations language, which Drury forwarded to Krug in early February 1949. Krug accepted the revised regulations on February 19, and they became effective on March 3. The final regulation, which became a park-specific special regulation within the *Code of Federal Regulations*, had three parts. First, it required that all prospectors register before entering the park. Second, it demanded that all prospectors fill out a specific, seven-part registration form that needed to be renewed each year. Third, it established regulations governing how prospectors could use, and gain access to, their mining claims.⁸²

The idea for a withdrawal area began at an Alaska Field Committee meeting in early October 1948. The committee considered Governor Ernest Gruening’s motion to support an authorization measure for a cement plant in the park⁸³, and soon afterward it voted favorably on that measure. NPS officials, recognizing the groundswell of both public and private support for the plant and the apparent lack of other economically-viable plant locations, reacted in two ways. First, they proposed that the acreage surrounding the mining claims, and the proposed plant site, “might be withdrawn as a Public Use Site, to protect the interests of the government in the venture.”⁸⁴ In addition, they tentatively decided to excise the limestone area from the park. Assistance Secretary Warne, recognizing the necessity of this two-pronged approach, asked the Bureau of Land Management to prepare a public land order that would “withdraw certain lands within the Mount McKinley National Park in aid of proposed legislation to provide for the proper development and disposition of limestone deposits in the area.” By mid-November, the proposed order, which called for 6,200 acres to be withdrawn “from all forms of appropriation, including the mining laws,” had been forwarded to Interior Secretary Krug and other federal officials. (See Map 7.) The BLM Director approved the proposed order on December 10, and it was implemented eight days later.⁸⁵

In the meantime, momentum continued to build for a measure to authorize the plant’s construction. Based on Gruening’s measure at the October 1948 Alaska Field Committee meeting, there was a general recognition that Alaska Delegate E. L. “Bob” Bartlett would be introducing authorization legislation in Congress. And although some in the NPS may have had misgivings about the plant, agency officials made no moves to impede it. In mid-September, Secretary Krug had written that “the existing [park] boundaries [in Alaska] were established without adequate



Map 7. Windy Creek Limestone Activity, 1948-1960

consideration of Park needs and I would not be willing to assume that they are reasonable or proper." The NPS's Hillory Tolson, in response, allowed that "in this the Secretary is undoubtedly right, and ... if it is at all possible, a boundary study should be made of our Alaska areas next summer, with particular emphasis on Mount McKinley and Katmai."⁸⁶ Supt. Been, upon receiving Tolson's memo, noted that "assuming that quarrying and cement manufacturing do develop near Windy Creek, the need for changing the boundary may have to be faced" and offered specific suggestions for a realigned boundary. And Director Drury, upon receiving Arthur Beaudin's request for "certain lands ... to permit the establishment and operation of a cement manufacturing plant," came to the same conclusion. In a memo to Warne, Drury noted that

I propose to proceed on the basis that this Service, after detailed boundary study to be undertaken with the advice of the Bureau of Mines, will recommend that a boundary revision be made to exclude the prospective limestone mining and cement activity from the park if the Department wishes to assist the proposal after it is finally found feasible, as it now seems likely to be.⁸⁷

In mid-December 1948, "the Secretariat, interested bureau heads and others" met and "concluded that the limestone-cement plant proposal ... would go ahead." Participants decided that the NPS "would draft legislation for revision of the park boundary to exclude the requisite limestone lands, such lands to go to the Alaska Railroad." A month later, Supt. Been stated that "there appears no urgency for precipitating a boundary revision" in the near future, and the agency's regional director, O. A. Tomlinson, noted "that we foresee a real danger in any elimination of park lands." The agency ultimately decided that a boundary revision was not a near-term priority.⁸⁸

In June 1949, Delegate Bartlett followed up on Gruening's move from October 1948 and introduced a bill in Congress that would enable the U.S. president to direct the construction of a cement plant in the territory and lease it on "such terms as he may deem proper." A House subcommittee held a hearing on the bill a month later, and Secretary Krug endorsed it; Krug, citing the fact that cement prices were four times as high in Fairbanks as they were in Seattle, supported federal financing and construction of such a plant in the public interest. Subcommittee members, however, were openly concerned about the lack of private capital for such a venture, and as result,

U.S. Interior Department personnel constructed a "tote road" to reach the limestone assessment site. Part of this road was located inside park boundaries. DENA 16-5, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



Bartlett was informed that his bill was being held over for a year.⁸⁹

In late 1949, a new player entered the fray: Permanente Cement Company, a subsidiary of Kaiser Industries, Inc. Recognizing the huge and continuing postwar demand for cement, the company announced its intention to build a bulk cement storage facility in Anchorage, which it would supply from one or more west coast ports via Victory ships. Despite a number of bureaucratic hurdles, Permanente officials persisted in their quest, and on July 14, 1950, it opened its Anchorage facility. Cement prices in Anchorage promptly declined by 25 percent.⁹⁰

Despite that welcome news, some federal officials continued to believe that the issue of a publicly supported Alaska-based cement plant merited further study. The Air Force, for example, concluded a May 1950 study by "strongly" recommending that the Interior Department investigate "the feasibility of producing cement economically in Alaska," and that September—two months after the storage facility opened—a Stateside consultant noted that territorial security and self-development would take place "only when Alaska obtains its own cement plant, based on local raw materials." Given those viewpoints, Bartlett reintroduced his bill in late May 1950. But by this time, the Bureau of Reclamation had completed a study which concluded that the cement plant was not economically feasible. James P. Davis, the director of the Division of Territories and Island Possessions, urged that Bartlett's bill should not be supported "unless and until present pros-

pects of cheap cement fail." Perhaps as a result, the bill did not pass.⁹¹

During the summer of 1950, U.S. Geological Survey crews—who were in the midst of a planned five-year park geological study—spent the summer investigating a broad area between Windy Station and Foggy Pass; as part of their work, which included the construction of a "tote road to the face of the limestone cliff and across a portion thereof," they drilled limestone core samples along Windy Creek.⁹² The resulting cores "revealed the presence of deposits of limestone and shale that may be useful as the source of raw materials for cement manufacture."⁹³ Shortly after the completion of the field season, Acting USGS Director Thomas B. Nolan met about the matter with NPS and BLM officials. Worried about an influx of speculative claims in an area that had not already been withdrawn, the government leaders concluded that "immediate withdrawal appears to be the only solution." In late November, the USGS and NPS directors issued a joint statement declaring their interest in withdrawing a large area "until such time as it is determined whether or not the Department or the Government wishes to take steps directed toward the establishment of a cement manufacturing plant." (The proposed withdrawal area was approximately 119,000 acres, some 66,000 of which were located within the park; see Map 7.) The joint proposal would revoke the previous (December 1948) public land order but withdraw the larger area "from all forms of appropriation under the public land laws ... and reserved ... for use in connection with the national defense." It was forwarded on to Interior Secretary Chap-

By September 1963, when this photo was taken, the 7-year-old landing strip on the West Fork of Windy Creek (which was adjacent to a potential limestone development area) had suffered considerable erosion. DENA 16-33, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



man, who signed the order on February 2, 1951. The order was implemented six days later.⁹⁴

Shortly after the withdrawal took effect, the Interior Department issued yet another contract⁹⁵ to consultant Ivan Bloch, which was intended to assess the size of the Interior's present and future cement market. He asked his colleague, K. E. Hamblen, to determine the operating and capital costs for 250-ton-per-day cement plant in the Cantwell-Windy area. The reports, submitted in July 1951, concluded that cement produced at such a plant would cost anywhere from six to nine times as much as the Permanent cement available in Anchorage. Hamblen concluded that a cement plant was still necessary. But government officials—those with both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations—showed no further interest in a subsidy, and the project appeared dead.⁹⁶

Due to the language contained in the February 1951 public land order, interest in the park's limestone died away until the summer of 1956, when Park Service officials caught wind of furtive mining-related activity along Windy Creek. NPS officials received a report that a prospector had taken a "crawler tractor" into the West Fork of Windy Creek, so on July 23, a three-man party flew over the area and discovered "a short, narrow landing strip, some exploration digging, and staking," along with a damaged airplane and a

small tractor. A follow-up call to the U.S. Commissioner in Nenana revealed that Fairbanks resident Mark Ringstad had recently filed a claim in the area. Although the claim was legally staked according to BLM mining regulations, NPS officials were concerned because Ringstad had failed to register with park authorities according to the regulations that had been implemented in early 1949. They were also concerned because constructing an airstrip in the park violated NPS regulations. Two years later, Supt. Jacobs contacted Ringstad and suggested that he fill out the required registration form; the claimant showed no interest in doing so, however, and he made no immediate move to develop the site.⁹⁷

Two years later, Interior Secretary Fred A. Seaton signed a public land order that revoked the 119,000-acre withdrawal that had been implemented over the southeastern end of the park in February 1951. Perhaps, by the spring of 1958, the recent lack of interest in developing the area's limestone deposits may have moved federal officials to undo the seven-year-old withdrawal. But the more immediate reason for revoking the withdrawal was the July 1956 passage of the Alaska Mental Health Enabling Act.⁹⁸ Section 201 of that act allowed the territory to select a million acres of "vacant, unappropriated, and unreserved" federal land. Inasmuch as approximately 53,000 acres within the withdrawal were outside the park boundary—and thus

In 1963, remains of the abandoned limestone claim on the West Fork of Windy Creek included this small frame building, bulldozer cuts, oil barrels, an eroding landing strip, and a "cat trail" connecting the claim to the railroad. DENA 16-37, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



potentially eligible for selection—the Interior Department agreed in late May 1958 to revoke the withdrawal. A clause within the revocation, however, applied to the park as well; it stated that on November 25, 1958 (which was 180 days after the public land order was approved), that the entire 119,000-acre area in the former withdrawal would be “open to location under the United States mining laws.” In response to the order, several parties showed a new or renewed interest in the area’s limestone possibilities; that same day, the Alaska Limestone Corporation “restaked its limestone lode mining claims located in the Foggy Pass Area,” and soon afterward, two parties announced their intention to erect a cabin on their claim. But judging by a September 1959 NPS site visit, neither party built a cabin that year.⁹⁹

In early 1960, the Alaska Limestone Corporation representatives staked several additional claims on “Upper Windy Creek” and obtained the required prospector’s permit. Company official O. E. Loring, Jr. also requested permission to land aircraft on the property; when told that such an activity was illegal, he declared his intention to appeal that decision to a “higher authority.”¹⁰⁰ In mid-June, a ranger on patrol was surprised to discover that “an airstrip some 1000 feet in length had been constructed on a gravel bar near the head of the canyon.” Soon afterward, Loring “readily admitted that he had constructed it on advice from his legal counsel.” An Interior Department attorney, Rita Singer, stated that “it is my opinion that the company would have

a right to put in its own airstrip since it is very likely that there are no roads making the area accessible otherwise.”¹⁰¹ Soon afterward, the Alaska Limestone Corporation sold its claims to a California corporation called Alaska Portland Cement, Ltd., and that October the new company announced that it was “now at work on ... feasibility studies” for a cement production plant, the site of which would be “somewhere in the Railbelt section.” Those plans did not pan out, however, and the company’s plans were quietly shelved—at least for the time being.¹⁰²

Three years later, in July 1963, Alaska Portland Cement executives announced a new cement-plant proposal. Citing a recently-completed market analysis that showed continuing high demand for cement, the company revealed plans to build a 500,000-barrel-per-year cement plant along the Jack River near Cantwell. Limestone to supply the plant would come from a quarry located at the company’s claims on the West Fork of Windy Creek, near Foggy Pass; the quarry and plant would be connected by an industrial road. Officials announced that construction on the plant would begin the following spring and would be completed in 1965.¹⁰³ The State of Alaska strongly supported the proposal and offered the company a tax break; conservationists, however, felt that the planned project was “highly objectionable” because quarrying operations would be taking place within the national park.¹⁰⁴ The proposal remained a major discussion topic, both in Alaska newspapers and among NPS officials, for months afterward. But

plant construction, promised for the spring of 1964, did not take place, and in late June, the company announced that the Cantwell area was no longer being considered as a cement-plant location.¹⁰⁵

After that time, no serious proposals arose to either develop the park's limestone deposits or construct a nearby cement plant, and by 1975, the West Fork claim area was marked by a series of bulldozer cuts, oil barrels, an old sledge, a 10' x 14' frame building, piles of nearby refuse, an eroding airstrip, and a "cat trail" connecting the claim to the railroad.¹⁰⁶ The area was closed to mining in 1976 (see below), and since then further deterioration has set in.

Attempts to Mine Building Stone in the Park

On August 2, 1952, S. Robert Corey from the Great Northern Stone Corporation, based in Anchorage, staked a standard 1,320-foot x 660-foot mining claim on a bench just south of Hines Creek just upstream from the Riley Creek confluence, about one-half mile south of the park hotel. (The northern edge of this claim was part of the old Morino homestead, which the NPS had acquired in October 1947; the remainder was NPS land that had never been in private hands.) Approached by park superintendent Grant Pearson, Corey and a co-worker willingly filled out the paperwork to obtain a prospector's permit. Soon afterward, they started in to work, and by day's end they had obtained about 150 pounds of building-stone samples. As Pearson noted, "they said the stone was ideal for fireplace facing and rock veneer work and there was a market for this type of rock."¹⁰⁷

Pearson, hoping to prevent an expansion of this or similar mining activities, first asked regional

officials, "Can this company mine this stone? If not, what steps should we take to prevent it?" Before he got an answer, however, the claimants returned and began their "mining operations." Via a telephone call, therefore, Pearson was advised "to stop operations on Morino property since this area was purchased for the expansion of public use facilities for the park," although he was also advised "to allow continuation of mining operations on remainder of claim pending further advice" from Washington. Pearson, in response, visited the site but was unable to find any of the old Morino homestead's corner posts; indeed, he was unsure that there was any overlap between the old homestead and the stone company's claim. He was therefore powerless, in the short term, to halt the company's excavations.¹⁰⁸

At this point, NPS Director Conrad Wirth swung into action. Citing a recently-issued regulation that authorized Interior Department agencies to "withdraw or reserve lands of the public domain ... for public purposes," he urged agency officials—as a way to prevent the staking of additional claims—to visit the BLM's Alaska office "for withdrawal of all land covered by [the] mining claim from all forms of disposal under public land laws, including mining and mineral leasing laws. ... Meanwhile, you should also communicate with Alaska regional administrator for BLM to ascertain whether basis exists for declaring portion of claim located on public [i.e., non-Morino] land to be invalid."¹⁰⁹

Officials in the NPS's regional office responded to the first part of Wirth's telegram by sending a proposal, on August 20, to the Fairbanks BLM office to withdraw approximately 10,900 acres of land at the east end of the park, noting that the



This rock outcrop, which is just upstream from the confluence of Hines Creek (seen here) and Riley Creek, was the location of a claim to mine building stone in 1952. DENA 16-25, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

lands were “essential ... as an administrative site and for public use.” This irregularly-shaped area began three miles southeast of the park hotel and extended to Mile 5 of the park road, two miles west of park headquarters. Along that corridor, the withdrawal reached from one to three miles out from the park road.¹⁰⁹

Meanwhile, agency staff was well aware that the proposed withdrawal had no effect on the stone company’s existing claim, but they were reasonably sure that lands within the old Morino tract were not subject to entry under the mining laws. So they did their best to answer the other half of Wirth’s telegram; that is, to ascertain the legality of the portion of the company’s mining claim that was located south of the Morino tract. To that end, the regional director peppered the park staff with questions about the corporation and its activities at the park, and in response, he learned that excavations had taken place on a 200-foot x 50-foot portion of the claim and that only one flatcar of stone had been removed thus far. As to the purpose for the stone excavation, park officials—admitting it was hearsay—learned that the stone company had contracted with the Alaska Railroad to supply materials for a commemorative stone monument, near the Anchorage depot, upon which would be placed “Old No. 1,” which was “presumably” the railroad’s original steam engine. Park officials could find little other information that could shed light on the propriety of the corporation’s activities.¹¹⁰

Corporation officials, confident that no bureaucratic roadblocks stood in their way, visited with park staff on September 9. Given the fact that an unimproved road reached to within a few hundred feet of where stone removal was to take place, they informed agency representatives that beginning on September 10, they planned to extend that road to the proposed excavation site. But on September 11, NPS officials made a startling discovery: that all land on the stone company’s claim located south of the Morino tract was encompassed by either Executive Order 3617 or Executive Order 3800, which President Harding signed in January 1922 and March 1923, respectively (see Chapter 3). Both of those executive orders had withdrawn land “for use in connection with the administration of the Mount McKinley National Park,” and both included a clause that withdrew the land “from settlement, location, sale, or entry.” The orders made no specific mention of mineral entry; the Congressional acts that authorized the orders, however, stated that while metalliferous mining was sanctioned, non-metalliferous mining (such as building stone) was not.¹¹² Given that discovery, NPS officials ordered a halt to all

mining operations and also decided to deny the company’s road-construction permit. Company officials obediently stopped their excavation work. Regarding road improvements, however, the damage had already been done.¹¹³

Canvassing about for alternative sites for their building stone, company officials visited the park headquarters on September 12 and obtained a new prospector’s permit, this one for the Sable Pass area. Frank Hirst, on the park staff, immediately sent word of the new development to regional officials in San Francisco. Park superintendent Grant Pearson, at the time, was working at the regional office and noted that several other persons had also been investigating the park for building stone. NPS officials, recognizing that any company obtaining a legitimate building-stone claim along the park road might use it for purposes other than the railroad’s locomotive-monument contract, moved on September 16 to protect the entire road corridor from potential mineral incursions. More specifically, officials proposed a 70,150-acre withdrawal that covered all of the park road that had not been subject to the August 20 withdrawal proposal. The new proposal, if implemented, would withdraw all land within one-half mile of the park road. The area covered by the proposed withdrawal would broaden to one mile from the road in the vicinity of the park’s various campgrounds, and at the west end of the park road, the proposal called for a 3.8-mile by 5.5-mile rectangle to be withdrawn that would include Wonder Lake and surrounding territory.¹¹⁴

During the winter of 1952-53, the NPS and stone-corporation officials carried on a spirited correspondence about the legality of the Hines Creek claim. Despite the apparent finality of the NPS’s September 11 decision, the company’s attorney in October 1952 argued that the claim was valid and that “client will continue to retain possession of the claim and its use.” Again, the following April, attorneys sought clarification.¹¹⁵ NPS officials, for their part, hoped that the Fairbanks BLM office could help; that agency, however, took no action in the matter because it did “not notify claimants of the invalidity of their mining claims until a field investigation has been made and adverse proceedings initiated to declare the claims null and void.”¹¹⁶

Both park and regional officials sought Washington’s assistance for a legal means to invalidate the company’s claim, and they also vented their frustration at the lack of action regarding the two road-corridor withdrawal proposals that had been advanced in August and September 1952.¹¹⁷ The NPS, however, was stymied

on both counts. Regarding the existing claim, NPS Director Wirth could only state that the agency “should withhold immediate action” on the matter “pending further developments.” A regional official, in turn, told Supt. Pearson that “you should inform Mr. Arnell [the company attorney] that the National Park Service still considers the Great Northern Stone Corporation mining claim filed by Mr. Corey to be invalid but that pending further instructions from our Washington Office you will not interfere with work on the claim.” And regarding the two withdrawals, the issuance of a public land order implementing those withdrawals demanded the Interior Secretary’s approval, something that had not been granted by either outgoing secretary Oscar Chapman or incoming secretary Douglas McKay. The secretaries’ lack of action in the matter may have been caused by a solicitor’s opinion as it pertained to Death Valley National Monument, another park unit where mining was permitted. That opinion, expressed in 1942, noted that “No attempt to reserve [certain] lands ... from the operation of the mining laws, short of their elimination from the national monument, could be effective since it would conflict with the express congressional mandate in the statute.”¹⁰⁸ On that basis, it appeared that nothing short of congressional action would prohibit the broad application of the mining laws in Mount McKinley National Park.

Given the NPS’s failure to prevent further activity on the stone company’s mining claim, and the Interior Department’s failure to issue a withdrawal over the road corridor, the park

remained open to those interested in searching for, and developing, sites where economically-viable quantities of building stone were located. During the summer of both 1953 and 1954, for example, Corey continued to extract building stone from his Hines Creek claim (he removed at least three railroad cars of stone during this period). To gain additional materials, he created a new company—the Wonder Lake Building Stone Company—and filed on a new site at the north end of Wonder Lake in August 1953. By June 1955 the company was “now hauling rock from the Wonder Lake claim.”¹⁰⁹

The law, however, caught up with Corey that same month. U.S. Attorney Theodore F. (Ted) Stevens, in Fairbanks, filed a temporary restraining order against Corey and other company representatives, and soon afterward two deputy U.S. marshals and a federal treasury agent arrived at the park and served Corey with the order. Corey immediately stopped his operations. The company apparently filed an appeal against the court, asserting that it was now seeking antimony (in order to sidestep the prohibition against nonmetalliferous materials), but in mid-March 1957 the company’s attorney gave up the fight, stating “that they would agree to have judgment entered against them” and “a permanent injunction issued against any further claim or work.” A month later, a Fairbanks judge ordered stone company representatives “not to reenter Mount McKinley National Park for the purpose of making nonmetalliferous locations and mining claims in order to remove sandstone or other nonmetalliferous substances.”¹²⁰



The Wonder Lake Building Stone Company had an active claim in this area at the north end of Wonder Lake from August 1953 to March 1957, when an injunction prohibited any further work. DENA 16-16, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



It is believed that Earl Dunkle and his mining partners cut timber north of the park boundary and constructed this three-room log cabin on Slippery Creek in 1937. It provided housing for the people working at the lode mine just south of the cabin. DENA 16-2, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

By the time the judge made his decision against the Great Northern Stone Corporation, the long-anticipated Denali Highway was nearly complete. As noted above, the ongoing road construction had brought forth a revival of interest in the park by prospectors and miners. To ensure greater protection of the road corridor, Superintendent Duane Jacobs requested the issuance of a public land order that would preclude mining and prospecting within 1.5 miles of the park road. With no remaining legal hurdles in the way, the Interior Department soon afterward issued a proposal to withdraw the same two road-corridor parcels that had first been proposed almost five years earlier.¹²¹ In late June 1958, the proposal was implemented when the Interior Secretary's office issued a public land order reserving 81,050 acres along the park road corridor for "administrative sites and the protection and preservation of scenic and recreational areas." To accomplish those purposes the acreage was "withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the public-land laws, including the mining laws."¹²²

Congress Moves to Eliminate Mineral Entry in the Park

Between the 1950s and the mid-1960s, prospecting and mining in Mount McKinley National Park were fairly insignificant activities. The number of new mining claims during this period fluctuated wildly; in 1958, for example, 111 claims were recorded (primarily in the Windy Creek area), but in many other years no claims were recorded. Similarly the number of annual assessment reports filed for claims in the park during the early- and mid-1960s typically ranged from 15 to 30, although during the 1950s many years passed in which no assessment reports were

filed. Throughout this period, no claims were patented and the only minerals shipped from the park were occasional extractions, by a stone company, along the park road corridor. (In addition, park-road construction and maintenance crews also conducted gravel extraction.) NPS officials, however, became increasingly uneasy about the legality of park mining, and they were particularly concerned about the visual impacts of mining on the viewscape in the Eielson Visitor Center area.¹²³

In the late 1960s, high prices for mercury caused local miner Arley Taylor to re-stake Wes Dunkle's old mine along Slippery Creek. Then, in early September 1969, Taylor and another miner, Dan Ashbrook, "walked a pair of cats [Caterpillar tractors] towing sledges" from the Wonder Lake area to the mine via the Muddy River and overland to upper Slippery Creek. The pair's action was illegal, inasmuch as the NPS had asked Taylor to proceed westward along the park's northern boundary to the Slippery Creek drainage before heading south to the mine. Because they failed to follow the agency's recommendations, the 25-mile-long strip of "disturbed tundra vegetation and soil" provoked considerable ire, both among park staff and the small but dedicated number of conservationists concerned about park-area issues. That ire increased in 1970, when crews made a second "cat train" trip to the mine, cleared off the old airstrip, and engaged in illegal timber cutting. Activists recognized that the development of the Mount McKinley Mercury Mining, Inc. claims—which were "actively being explored" in 1970 for their antimony potential but were not yet being commercially developed—brought ecological

The small log shop and abandoned mercury mine shaft at the Slippery Creek claim, photographed above in 1965, were on the east side of "Mineral Mountain." This area was active during the 1920s and 1930s. Later mineral interest was focused on the west side of the mountain. Wayne Merry Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



destruction and visual scarring to one of the most remote parts of the park. The peak south of the camp soon became known, informally, as Mineral Mountain.¹²⁴

Recognizing that several prospectors had "disregarded the regulations, have not registered, and have independently entered the park creating scars and leaving refuse behind," agency staff prepared a document examining prospecting and mining issues both at Mount McKinley and Glacier Bay. That document stated that 310 mining claims had been filed at Mount McKinley National Park between 1917 and 1970; most of these were "the same mineral locations, top filed over and over again, after abandonment by the previous claimant." Only 93 claims were considered presently valid: 44 in the Slippery Creek area, 35 in the area north of Mount Eielson, and 14 along Windy Creek. These claims were held by just two companies and four individuals. The agency declared that mining in the park, and in other park units as well, was "socially uneconomic, however profitable it may be for individual operators." In order to halt future mining-related abuses, a necessary first step would be to stop new prospecting and mining, and that "to prevent actual development would require timely purchase of the rights by the government."¹²⁵

Given the national growth of the environmental movement during the 1960s—a movement that often spotlighted Alaska issues—some voices began to recognize that the problem at Slippery Creek was symptomatic of a broad problem that needed to be addressed at the legislative level. In

June 1970, the Public Land Law Review Commission published the landmark study *One Third of the Nation's Land*. That document recommended, on a general level, that "all nonconforming uses in national parks ... should be prohibited by statute;" more specifically, however, it recommended that provisions for mining in Mount McKinley National Park should be repealed.¹²⁶ Early the following year, the Fairbanks Group of the Sierra Club's Alaska Chapter made a similar decision; it prepared a formal proposal and sounded out the views of Alaska's congressional delegation on the subject. The legislators offered little support, however, so the idea languished for the time being. Conservationists who contacted NPS officials about the park's mining laws were assured that the agency was "opposed to mining and prospecting in the natural areas of the National Park System and trust that Congressional action to eliminate this incompatible use will be forthcoming in the future." Presently, however, "mining and prospecting are still practiced in some areas," and individuals still had the right to file mineral claims.¹²⁷

In December 1971, Congress passed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, and as noted in Chapter 8, the inclusion of Section 17(d)(2) in that act set off a mad scramble among government land-management agencies over the fate of previously-undesigned federal lands. The NPS and other agencies hurriedly organized teams that fanned out over lands that were being considered for new conservation units, and before long these teams began to assemble various master plans and environmental statements for the proposed units. These teams, among other

The two Caterpillar tractors that were driven from Wonder Lake to Slippery Creek mine in 1969 are pictured here at the Slippery Creek cabin in 2007. This equipment was utilized for production at the antimony mine at least through the 1975 season. NPS Photo



issues, needed to make decisions about mining in these areas. But as it pertained to Mount McKinley, that option was already decided early in the process; in March 1972, Assistant Interior Secretary Nathaniel Reed recommended that the existing park, along with Glacier Bay National Monument, should be withdrawn from the operation of the mining laws. The Alaska Planning Group, which was tasked to write various environmental documents pertaining to an expansion of Mount McKinley National Park, reiterated Reed's statement in the park's December 1973 master plan. It declared that "proposed legislation would close the entire enlarged park to mining" although "existing valid claims, carefully monitored and in accordance with regulations, will be permitted until each claim has been acquired or abandoned." The APG's *Final Environmental Statement*, released in October 1974, arrived at the same conclusion.¹²⁸

Congress, during this period, had not yet moved toward a legislative solution to the Alaska lands issue. Although Sen. Barry Goldwater and Rep. Morris Udall introduced bills (in July 1973) calling for the cessation of new mining entry throughout the National Park System, no action took place on either bill during the 94th Congress.¹²⁹ Instead, Congress focused on regulating the country's strip mines, an interest that resulted in the December 1974 passage of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, which did not become law because of President Ford's pocket veto. Congress passed a similar bill in May 1975, which Ford also vetoed; legislators tried to override the veto but were unable to do so.¹³⁰ Throughout this period, mining issues at Mount McKinley National Park remained active; in 1975, Interior Department officials stated

that at Slippery Creek, mining operations were commercially viable and were producing "approximately 100 tons of antimony ore per year, at a gross value of \$60,000." (A 1976 report by the park's resource management specialist lent corroboration to that claim, noting that the company had flown out bags of stibnite ore in both 1974 and 1975.) Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska), however, disputed these figures at a House subcommittee hearing, maintaining that "there is no mining now in McKinley Park."¹³¹

During the summer of 1975, however, new concerns arose when Congress learned about mining proposals within two different national park units. That September, worried that "there will soon be widespread strip mining in the Death Valley National Monument" and that "Glacier Bay National Monument in Alaska is also threatened by imminent mining," Rep. John Seiberling (D-Ohio) introduced a bill to "prohibit any mining in any areas of the National Park System." Two weeks later, Sen. Lee Metcalf (D-Mont.) introduced a similar bill; it was more protective than its House counterpart, however, because it proposed to ban all mining, for a three-year period, within the six NPS units that still sanctioned mining. Both bills called for the elimination of Section 4 in the 1917 bill that established Mount McKinley National Park; that section stated that "Nothing in this act shall in any way modify or affect the mineral land laws now applicable to the lands in the said park." And, as a housekeeping measure, the bills also called for the elimination of Section 2 of the Surface Use Act of January 26, 1931, which gave the Interior Secretary the authority to regulate mining activity within the park. The champions of these bills recognized that at Mount McKinley

and three other park units, there was “no present likelihood of mining, as there are no known economically recoverable mineral deposits.” These four units were included, however, to prevent the possibility of developments that were then looming at Death Valley and Glacier Bay national monuments.¹³²

Rep. Seiberling’s bill was considered in a National Parks and Recreation Subcommittee hearing on October 6. Assistant Secretary Reed, in attendance at the hearing, noted that “currently the only production ... from the park consists of approximately 100 tons of antimony ore per year” despite there being approximately 300 unpatented claims and mill sites in the park. The park’s only working mine, located on one of fifteen Slippery Creek claims, was small in scale, grossing only about \$60,000 per year.¹³³

Just one day later, Sen. Metcalf held an Interior and Insular Affairs Committee hearing on the bill. Many who attended offered their full support for the bill, but Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) had mixed views. As he later noted to a constituent, he felt that the park “should be withdrawn from further mining entry.” But he was opposed to Section 3 of the bill (which proposed a three-year park mining ban) because it “would constitute a taking of private property rights.” He felt that “the matter of prohibiting and/or acquiring the valid existing claims in McKinley Park be left for resolution when Congress considers the D-2 proposals to expand the boundaries of the Park.” Both Stevens and Sen. Gravel (D-Alaska) asked Metcalf to exclude Alaska areas entirely so that Alaska-specific provisions would be considered during the upcoming D-2 battle. Metcalf, however, showed little inclination to do so, and the bill that passed the Interior Committee in

December—and the full Senate the following February—banned future mineral entry at both Mount McKinley and Glacier Bay.¹³⁴ But the bill then got bogged down in the House over how to proceed with Death Valley’s talc and borax operations, and it did not clear the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee until August 1976. The bill passed the House on September 14, the Senate agreed to the House’s amendments on September 17, and President Ford signed the bill on September 28.¹³⁵

The new legislation, called the Mining in the Parks Act of 1976, stopped all new mineral entry into Mount McKinley National Park and in the other five NPS units noted above, and it also imposed a four-year moratorium on further surface disturbance at Mount McKinley and two of the above-named parks. And at Mount McKinley and three other park units, the act called on the Interior Secretary, by September 1978, to submit a study of the validity of the parks’ mining claims. Based on that decision, the study would then recommend whether the government planned to buy them back.¹³⁶

Valid mining claims, however, were a fixture in a total of eighteen NPS units, so to manage mining claims within these units, the Mining in the Parks Act subjected all activities resulting from the exercise of valid existing mineral rights to regulations prescribed by the Secretary of the Interior. Claimants, moreover, had to record existing claims with the Interior Secretary within a year: that is, by September 28, 1977. If they did not do so, their right to those claims would be forfeited.¹³⁷ The act also addressed the concerns of Senator Stevens and others, in two ways. First, it stated that anyone who held patented or unpatented mining claims, and felt



Eureka (later renamed Kantishna), shown here in 1919, continued to be a settlement of scattered cabins, a central mining camp for the creeks nearby. Stephen Foster Collection, 69-92-594, University of Alaska Fairbanks Archive



In the early 1920s the Kantishna Hydraulic Mining Company spent two years building a dam at the outlet of Wonder Lake (outside park boundaries until 1932), and two and one-half miles of ditch to carry water to their hydraulic operation on Moose Creek, near the mouth of Eureka Creek. The remains of that water diversion system are visible today along the hillside above Moose Creek. Bradford Washburn, #5998, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

that they had suffered a loss because of the act's provisions, could institute a lawsuit "to recover just compensation." The act also recognized that people who held claims in park units subject to the four-year moratorium (such as Mount McKinley) might have a difficult time selling them; given that fact, the act tried to ease the way to sell those claims if continued private ownership resulted in undue hardship.¹³⁸

Key to the act's implementation was the issuance of follow-up regulations. To that end, the Interior Department hurriedly prepared interim regulations that went into effect on November 11, just six weeks after the act's passage. Comprehensive regulations were published in January 1977.¹³⁹ As NPS Director Gary Everhardt noted when the second set of regulations was issued, "the new regulations enforce a much stricter approach to environmental conservation and reclamation on the park of mining companies operating in the National Park System." In order to control miners' access and land surface use and disturbance, the regulations focused on the issu-

ance of permits that would be granted only after a mining plan of operations had been approved. Miners who hoped to have their plans of operations considered for approval, moreover, had to submit them to the NPS by May 26, 1977.¹⁴⁰

Meanwhile, the Interior Department—following procedures laid out in regulations that were issued in the wake of the Mining in the Parks Act—proceeded to inventory the park's mineral resources. It did so on two levels. First, the Bureau of Mines tendered a contract to mining consultant Chuck Hawley on mining prospects throughout the park; that report was written during the winter of 1976-77 and identified a number of promising ore-bearing areas, particularly in the park's remote southwestern corner.¹⁴¹ On a more specific level, those with mining interests in the park responded to the September 1977 deadline by filing for 74 claims. Congress, in accordance with Section 6 of the act, also set a September 1978 deadline for the agency to complete validity determinations for those claims. If the NPS field investigators felt that any claims



The first large-scale hydraulic operation on Moose Creek was conducted by the Kantishna Hydraulic Mining Company. This photo, looking upstream, was taken on July 10, 1922. Steel pipe brought water from the ditch to the hydraulic mining site (in foreground, on far side of Moose Creek). P.S. Smith, 1404, U.S. Geological Survey

were economically unjustified, they would ask the BLM to issue a complaint contesting the claim.¹⁴²

NPS geologists, as a result, examined each of the outstanding mining claims during the 1978 field season. They then completed a study, issued in early October 1978, which concluded that, in their opinion, all 74 claims in the park were invalid. (In the technical language of mining regulation, the investigators concluded that “there are not presently disclosed within the boundaries of the mining claims minerals of a variety subject to the mining laws, sufficient in quantity, quality, and value to constitute a discovery.”) As a result, the NPS made no plans to either buy out the existing claimants or alter boundaries to conform to active mining areas. Instead, the Bureau of Land Management moved to contest each claim. It filed complaints against the various claim holders in the spring of 1979.¹⁴³

The Interior Department, anticipating that most if not all of the claimants would dispute the validity determinations, announced that it would hold hearings on the claims in 1979.¹⁴⁴ Those who chose to dispute their claims included Arley Taylor and Wayne Copley, who had 12 claims at Slippery Creek and Birch Creek; the Mount McKinley Mercury Mining Company, with 11 claims at Slippery Creek; Harold Herning, whose family had 13 claims at Copper Mountain; and the Alaska Limestone Corporation, which had 14 claims along Windy Creek.¹⁴⁵ These disputes were adjudicated by the Interior Department’s Office of Hearings and Appeals.

Taylor, Copley, and the Mount McKinley Mercury Mining Company argued their case before

administrative law judge E. Kendall Clarke in May 1980, and again in December 1980. In January 1981, an Interior Department solicitor wrote a post-hearing brief which concluded that “because there is not sufficient mineralization [at the claims] to warrant a prudent man to further invest his time and effort and money with the prospect of a valuable mine ... the contestees have failed to prove ... that any of the contested claims are valid.” Clarke apparently agreed with that rationale and, on December 15, 1981, he declared that all 23 claims were null and void. Taylor and Copley’s attorneys appealed the decision, but given no follow-up evidence to justify the appeal, the appeal was dismissed on April 28, 1982.¹⁴⁶

The case against the 13 Herning claims took a similar course. In September 1977, Herning’s attorney submitted the proper paperwork in response to the Mining in the Parks Act. The following year, however, a NPS geologist and an NPS mining engineer made several visits, and based on their investigations, the BLM, acting on the NPS’s behalf, filed an April 1979 complaint that there were “not minerals ... sufficient in quantity, quality and value to constitute a discovery.” Discussions, at first, hinged upon whether Herning had filed the appropriate paperwork in satisfaction of Federal Land Policy and Management Act provisions, and based on the results of a Fairbanks hearing, administrative law judge E. Kendall Clarke, in March 1980, declared the claims null and void. But Herning’s attorney appealed the case, and in June 1982 a new hearing, also in Fairbanks, attempted to resolve whether the claims held sufficient minerals to constitute a discovery. On June 9, 1983, administrative law judge L. K. Luoma concluded that “the

After the Hering mining claims were declared invalid, Harold Hering's cabin has remained at the site, serving to remind us of the historic mining activities that took place from 1921 through the 1970s on Mt. Eielson. The cabin exhibits the effects of weathering from the time it was built in 1954 to 2003, when this photo was taken. NPS Photo



evidence presented by [Hering] falls far short of overcoming [the government's] case," and he declared all 13 claims invalid. Hering did not appeal, and the case was closed.¹⁴⁷

The Alaska Limestone Corporation (ALC), with its Windy Creek interests, held out longer than the others. Company representatives claimed that the limestone deposits on their 280-acre claims were worth \$100 million and that their site improvements (including an airstrip, roads, a cabin, etc.) were worth about \$1 million. Convinced that their claims were still marketable, they claimed that the BLM report, which concluded otherwise, was a "hatchet job." Declaring that the Mining in the Parks Act (with its four-year moratorium on substantial new mining exploration and development) prevented the company from "making entry upon its property," ALC attorneys filed two lawsuits in U.S. District Court in the matter, both of which were dismissed by Judge James Fitzgerald. Corporation attorneys, undaunted, then pursued their claims before administrative law judge E. Kendall Clarke, who heard their case in May 1980. In 1981, he declared the claims null and void; company officials appealed the decision, only to have the judge rule again in the government's favor in late August 1982. ALC officials and their attorney, Edgar Paul Boyko, then appealed the decision to the U.S. District Court, but in April 1985, Judge Fitzgerald again ruled against the company. The ALC then appealed Fitzgerald's ruling, but in September 1986 its appeal was denied.¹⁴⁸

Deliberations Over Mining in the New Park Units

As noted in Chapter 8, the nine-year period between 1971 and 1980 was dominated by the process—advanced first by executive agencies, and later by Congress—that resulted in a substantial expansion of Mount McKinley National Park's boundaries and the establishment of Denali National Park and Preserve. The fate of the so-called "national interest lands" was fought throughout the State of Alaska. In the areas surrounding Mount McKinley National Park, however, efforts to expand the boundaries had begun much earlier (see Chapter 7): a 1968 master plan study had proposed the inclusion of most of the Kantishna Hills as well as the Dunkle Mine area, although the 1970 proposal that Interior Secretary Walter Hickel had approved ignored both areas. President Nixon's December 1971 signing of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act brought on a flurry of new park proposals, and all of those advanced by the NPS or the Alaska Planning Group (APG) included both the Kantishna Hills and Dunkle Mine within its boundaries.

Major questions remained, however, regarding how mining would be managed in the areas proposed for the park expansion. As noted above, APG officials concluded in December 1973, and again in October 1974, that any new areas included in the park would be closed to new mineral entry and development.¹⁴⁹ Other entities gave different recommendations, however. By July 1973, the Joint Federal-State



By 1937, when the Alaska Road Commission took this photograph, the park road had neared Kantishna, providing the long-awaited road access from the mining district to the Alaska Railroad. The historic Kantishna Roadhouse is the two-story structure centered in the photo. Alaska Road Commission Collection, 61-18-102, Alaska State Library

Land Use Planning Commission had concluded that all of the proposed additions south of the existing park should be open to new mining; north of the park, mining should be sanctioned in the Kantishna Hills and adjacent areas to the north and east but prohibited to the west. Mining advocates, predictably, argued that the various APG proposals would needlessly lock up Alaska's mineral wealth. One state legislator, Rep. "Red" Swanson of Nenana, was so irked at the APG proposals that he introduced a bill calling for a Kantishna State Recreation Area, which "recogniz[ed] the value to the people of the state of the existing mineral industry in the area," and Alaska mining industry representatives prepared a statewide "Alaska Resource Preservation" bill that proposed only small additions to the National Park System.¹⁵⁰

As noted in Chapter 8, conservationists, developers, and a host of other interests wrestled with the Alaska lands question in Congress between 1977 and 1980. Rep. Morris Udall's initial bill, introduced in January 1977, stated that all of the new or expanded NPS units would be "withdrawn, subject to valid existing rights, from all forms of appropriation under the mining laws and from operation of the mineral leasing laws."

Almost six months later, however, Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) introduced a more development-friendly "consensus bill" that called for a relatively small amount of parkland (where new mining would be prohibited), but a much larger acreage would be allotted to "Federal Cooperative Lands" which would be administered by the newly-created Alaska Land Classification Commission and would "be open to all uses authorized under the public land laws except disposal."¹⁵¹ In August 1977, NPS Director William Whalen recommended the continuation of all valid existing rights for miners, but he opposed any new mineral exploration, location, and leasing. A month later, Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus, in a similar vein, noted that "national parks, monuments and wild rivers established by this legislation will be withdrawn from all mineral exploration, entry, or leasing, subject to valid existing rights."¹⁵²

As Udall's bill wound its way through the committee process and onto the House floor, new features were added. By the time the bill passed the House, in mid-May 1978, it had several mining-related features. First, it stated that "all public lands within the boundaries of any conservation system unit in Alaska are withdrawn



By the time this photograph was taken in 1956, only a handful of permanent residents lived in the Kantishna area. Abandoned cabins were often “recycled” for new construction or firewood in this area where timber was hard to get. The two-story Kantishna Roadhouse, center, and the Busia cabin, left, are still standing in 2008. Charlie Ott Photo, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

from all forms of entry or appropriation under the mining laws of the United States.” Second, it stated that the Interior Department would “continue mineral assessment programs ... in order to expand the data base with respect to the mineral potential of all public lands in Alaska.” And finally, the procedures for the assessment program had to be transmitted to Congress by October 1981.¹⁵³ The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, using the House bill as a template, produced an October 1978 committee report that, to some extent, duplicated the House’s efforts as they pertained to mining regulation. The Senate’s bill, however, was more strict in that it prohibited core-sampling and other on-the-ground mineral assessment procedures. In addition, senators—particularly Senator Stevens—recognized the special qualities of both the Kantishna Hills and Dunkle Mine areas by asking the Alaska Land Use Council (which would have been created by this bill) to collaborate with the Interior Department on a study of these areas that would evaluate the area’s resources and “may include recommendations with respect to such resources as the Council may determine.”¹⁵⁴ Both the Senate committee bill and the House bill died, however, because the 95th Congress adjourned without passing an Alaska lands bill.

In January 1979, the new Congress made a renewed attempt to pass a comprehensive lands bill. Once again, Rep. Udall introduced a conservation-oriented bill, which in its mining provisions was similar to the May 1978 House bill but omitted the three-year deadline for the mining program’s assessment procedures to be announced. This language stayed largely unchanged in the bill that the full House passed in May 1979. The Senate, however, responded by re-introducing the same bill that had emerged from the Energy Committee the previous October.¹⁵⁵ Discussions by the full Senate did not begin until mid-July 1980. What emerged from those discussions was a bill that the Senate passed in mid-August and, for reasons discussed in Chapter 8, was signed into law by President Carter on December 2.¹⁵⁶

The so-called Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act contained several mining-related provisions, most of which pertained to all new or expanded NPS areas. Section 206, for example, stated that “[s]ubject to existing rights ..., the Federal lands within units of the National Park System established or expanded by or pursuant to this Act are hereby withdrawn from ... location, entry, and patent under the United States mining laws [and] disposition



This aerial overview of Kantishna and Moose Creek, with Eldorado Creek on the left and Eureka Creek on the right, shows the large-scale placer mining on patented claims along Moose Creek in 1983. NPS Photo

under the mineral leasing laws.” Section 1110(b) guaranteed “adequate and feasible access” to those with “privately owned land, including subsurface rights of such owners underlying public lands, or a valid mining claim...”. Section 1010(a) stated that for all public lands in Alaska, the Interior Secretary would conduct a mineral assessment program “in order to expand the data base with respect to the mineral potential of such lands.” This program provided for aerial reconnaissance over all public lands; core samples and test drilling would also be conducted on most public lands, but not within the areas added to the National Park System. Finally, Section 1011 called on executive agencies, once each year, to share their newly-discovered mining assessment information with Congress.¹⁵⁷

The single ANILCA provision unique to newly-expanded portions of Denali National Park was Section 202(3)(b). This section stated that the Alaska Land Use Council would collaborate with the Interior Secretary on “a study of the Kantishna Hills and Dunkle Mine areas of the park” and to issue a report to Congress by December 1983. The study would describe and evaluate a broad range of area resources; in addition, “the Council, in consultation with the Secretary,” would “compile information relating to the mineral potential of the areas encompassed within the study, the estimated cost of acquiring mining properties, and the environmental consequences of further development.” Congress, knowing full well that both the Kantishna Hills and Dunkle Mine areas had a long, complex mining history along with an active cluster of current mining opera-

tions, wanted to ensure that the government would be well-informed about the broad range of area resources before it made further land use decisions.¹⁵⁸

Managing the Park’s Mineral Resources, 1978-1985

As noted above, Congress passed the Mining in the Parks Act in September 1976. In the wake of that law, the NPS issued implementing regulations in late January 1977, and the federal Bureau of Land Management completed a report in early October 1978 that ruled on the validity of the park’s various mining claims. The completion of that report meant that the NPS was one step closer to simplifying its management over the park’s mineral resources.

In December 1978, however, President Carter—disappointed that Congress had failed to pass comprehensive Alaska lands legislation—issued seventeen proclamations that established national monuments on approximately 56 million acres of Alaska land. Thirteen national monuments were entrusted to the National Park Service, and one of these was Denali National Monument, a 3,890,000-acre unit that extended north, west, and south of Mount McKinley National Park. Within the newly-designated area was a number of mineral extraction areas, including the Dunkle Mine area (along the West Fork of the Chulitna River), the Tokositna Area (in the Tokositna River drainage), and the Kantishna Hills. The proclamation noted that all lands within the monument were “hereby appropriated and withdrawn from entry, location, sale, or other disposition under the public land



This 1920s photo shows the Quigleys' Red Top Mine and their cabin on the hillside to the right of Friday Creek. Quigley Ridge is on the right. Quigley Collection 80-46-247, University of Alaska Fairbanks Archive

laws, other than exchange," although holders of mineral patents and claims retained their rights to those properties.¹⁵⁹

When Carter signed the Denali National Monument proclamation, most of the land in the new monument was public land that was being administered by the Bureau of Land Management. On October 21, 1976—less than a month after the passage of the Mining in the Parks Act—Congress had also passed the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), which redefined the BLM's mission. Section 314 of that act had mandated that the owners of mining claims on BLM land conform to requirements that were roughly similar to those that had been mandated by the Mining in the Parks Act. Specifically, Section 314 stated that owners of unpatented lode or placer mining claims—within a three-year timeframe—had to 1) file either a "notice of intention to hold

the mining claim" or an affidavit of assessment work at the local BLM office, 2) give a copy of the appropriate paperwork to "the office of the Bureau designated by the Secretary" (thus to the park superintendent if the claim was located in an NPS unit), and 3) provide the designated official with "a description of the location of the mining claim or mill or tunnel site sufficient to locate the claimed lands on the ground."¹⁶⁰ Given the language in Section 314, owners of mining claims in the newly-designated monument had until October 21, 1979 to register and describe their claims. The Alaska mining industry, concerned over how the new monuments would affect the recording process, relayed their concerns to BLM and NPS officials. Together, they clarified that the primary location for mining claim registration for areas in Denali National Monument (and millions of additional acres subject to Carter's proclamation) would be at the offices of the BLM, not the NPS.¹⁶¹

NPS officials in Alaska recognized that the Mining in the Parks Act, which pertained at the time only to the “old park,” contained a clause (Section 4) that prevented the expansion of existing mining operations in the park for a four-year period. Because of that clause, and because of the NPS’s negative validity determinations, mining in the “old park” came to a virtual standstill after the 1976 season, and any arguments over various claimants’ mining plans of operations became part of a larger argument over the validity of those claims.

But for many of the mining claims in the newly-designated Denali National Monument, there was a proven record of recent mining activity. As noted above, mining had taken place in the Kantishna Hills off and on since 1903, and during the 1970s, mines in this area had produced commercial quantities of silver, antimony, and gold. (In 1975 alone, according to one report, “approximately nine placer mining operations involving about 30 men yielded at least 1,000 ounces of gold from Caribou, Glacier, Yellow, Eureka, Eldorado, Spruce, and Glen creeks.” Another report, issued the same year, stated that “six operations were underway” in the Kantishna area, “three using dozers and ground sluices, three using front-end loaders and elevated washing-screening plants.”)¹⁶² In other parts of the newly-designated monument, mining was a less important issue; in the Dunkle Mine area, for example, no active mining had taken place since 1954, and in the Ruth Glacier-Tokositna area, development had never proceeded beyond exploratory activity.¹⁶³

According to the mining regulations that were issued after the Mining in the Parks Act, owners of mining claims within the monument’s boundaries were required to complete, and gain approval of, a mining plan of operations before they could begin work on their claims in 1979. In areas outside of Alaska, the issuance of these mining plans was typically preceded by a field examination conducted by an NPS mining engineer. But given Alaska’s short field season and the huge number of mining claims that had just been absorbed into the new NPS units, NPS officials in early 1979 issued a notice stating that mining claim owners—rather than waiting for a formal validity examination—should file a Supplemental Claim Information Statement as part of their mining plan of operations.¹⁶⁴ As a result, owners of various Kantishna-area mining claims submitted mining plans of operations prior to the 1979 field season; the Alaska Miners Association, in most instances, assisted miners with this task. And except in a few instances where claimants could not prove a legal right to specific claims, NPS officials told claimants that their claims were “considered eligible for continued operations” and that “you are hereby authorized to continue your mining activities on a temporary basis ... in accordance with the details and procedure of your proposed plan of operations.” Claimants were warned, however, that the agency’s expedited approval “should in no way be construed as a final determination of validity.”¹⁶⁵

The NPS, recognizing that mineralization existed in many areas within the newly-established



During 1982 and 1983, large-scale placer mining was conducted on the Discovery claim on Friday Creek, just upstream from the creek’s park road crossing. In this 1983 photo, the Red Top Mine is at the center of the photo. NPS Photo, WAGS Collection



In 1984, this claim on upper Friday Creek was being mined with large equipment. Claire Roberts Photo, NPS, WAGS Collection

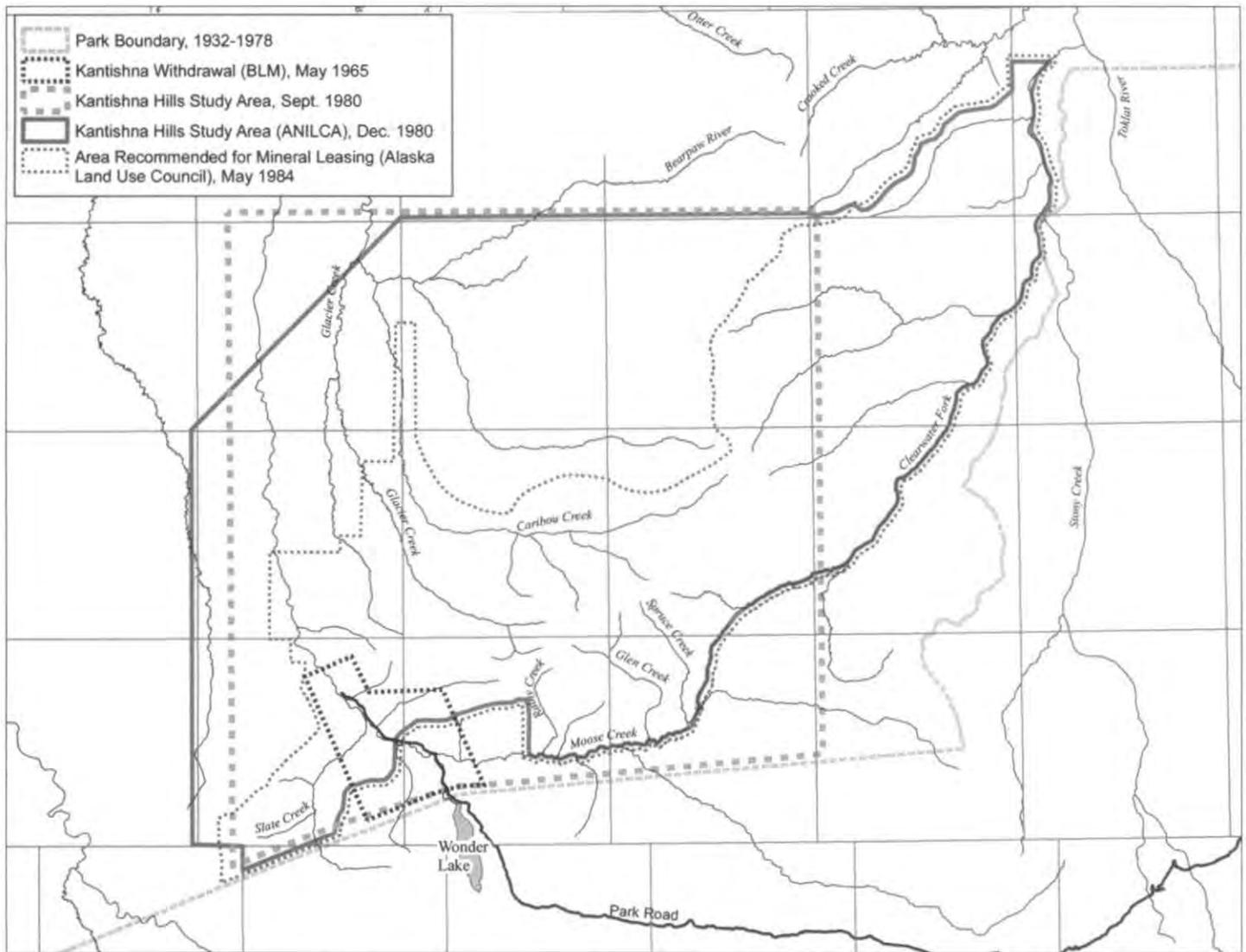
monument, dispatched several employees from the Denver Service Center's Special Studies Unit to learn more about the ongoing mining operations plus the major natural and cultural resources in the surrounding area. One DSC staffer, Wayne Hamilton, remained in the area from July through September 1979. He concluded, in a season-ending report, that "the validity of claims associated with many of the ongoing operations is probably assured based on an informal assessment," but "some of the claims being worked on a very small scale may be invalid." He conceded that "any National Park Service efforts to independently examine any one of these claims for validity would be an expensive and time consuming affair", a process made even more problematic "if the cooperation of the miners were not forthcoming." He recommended a long-term, expanded NPS monitoring and management role.¹⁶⁶ At this time, the agency had little interest in land acquisition; as Director William Whalen noted, the agency's goal was "to purchase private inholdings in the new national monuments on a willing seller-willing buyer basis. It is not anticipated that an active land acquisition program will be developed there, especially in the first few years."¹⁶⁷

Based on Hamilton's data, DSC staff returned in the spring of 1980 and established an ad hoc, 180,000-acre Kantishna Hills Study Area (see Map 8), where most of the recent mining activity had taken place. A team under the direction of Alex Carter began to compile information for a report "intended to assist the NPS ... in adequately assessing the effects of existing and

future mining activities on [area] resources ... and to expedite the processing of proposed mining plans." The agency hoped that the material would provide enough data for "adequately evaluating the majority of proposed plans and preparing the necessary environmental analyses and reviews."¹⁶⁸

The investigators soon learned that the area offered a wide variety of minerals. Deposits of lead, silver, zinc, antimony, and gold were found in several areas, while mercury and tungsten occurred in single deposits. Based on BLM data supplied after the FLPMA-mandated October 1979 deadline, the area contained 163 recorded placer claims (none of them patented) and 128 recorded lode claims (34 of them patented); together, these 291 claims covered 6,580 acres. More than two-thirds of those claims, however, were not being actively worked. DSC staff, during their 1980 investigations, noted that just 69 placer claims were being mined by 12 operators and that only 8 lode claims were being mined by 3 operators.¹⁶⁹ The agency's September 1980 report provided information about each potentially valid claim as well as additional details on active mining operations; also included was a brief history of area mining, information about the environmental impacts of mining activities in each drainage area, and suggested mining mitigation methods.¹⁷⁰

By the time DSC had issued its 1980 Kantishna report, both houses of Congress had passed an Alaska lands bill, and in December 1980 President Carter signed ANILCA into law. ANILCA,



Map 8. Kantishna Hills Administrative Actions, 1965-1984

as noted above, called for a special Kantishna Hills study. That study would be distinct from the DSC effort in four ways: 1) it would include the Dunkle Mine area (west of Cantwell) as well as the Kantishna Hills, 2) it called for a collaboration between the Interior Department and the Alaska Land Use Council,¹⁷¹ 3) the study would examine a broad range of area resources, not just mining, and 4) it would “compile information relating to the mineral potential” of the two areas as well as “the estimated cost of acquiring mining properties.”¹⁷² In order to respond to its new mining-related tasks, Congress provided a \$650,000 funding allotment during the 1981 fiscal year; that allowance, which would be spent throughout Alaska, was a greater amount than had been allotted to any of the newly-established parks.¹⁷³

Soon after ANILCA's passage, NPS staff began to re-examine the work they had undertaken at Kantishna in 1980. Inasmuch as Congress had established a new Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study Area with specifically-delineated

boundaries, the Kantishna portion of the study area was expanded from approximately 180,000 acres to 194,968 acres; added to that was the Dunkle Mine area, which comprised most of a single township (22,841 acres).¹⁷⁴ The NPS study team, hoping to be all-inclusive, reached out and included all areas in Denali National Park and Preserve that contained recorded mining claims; this not only included the West Fork area (which was in and near the Dunkle township) but also the Tokositna area (which had two small claim groups near the terminus of Tokositna and Ruth glaciers).¹⁷⁵

The team released its findings in a September 1981 report. It stated that the Kantishna Hills had a total of 150 recorded placer claims (18 fewer than the year before, although 51 other placer claims were under adjudication); in addition, this area now had 126 recorded lode claims, 2 fewer than in 1980.¹⁷⁶ (See Map 9.) In the Dunkle Mine area, there were 18 placer claims and another 187 lode claims, and in the Tokositna area, 8 lode claims were located west of the Tokositna

This 1984 photo, looking downstream, shows placer mining on upper Friday Creek. The Kragness camp of 1982-83 on the Discovery claim, once located downstream from the active mining area, is now gone. Claire Roberts Photo, NPS, WAGS Collection



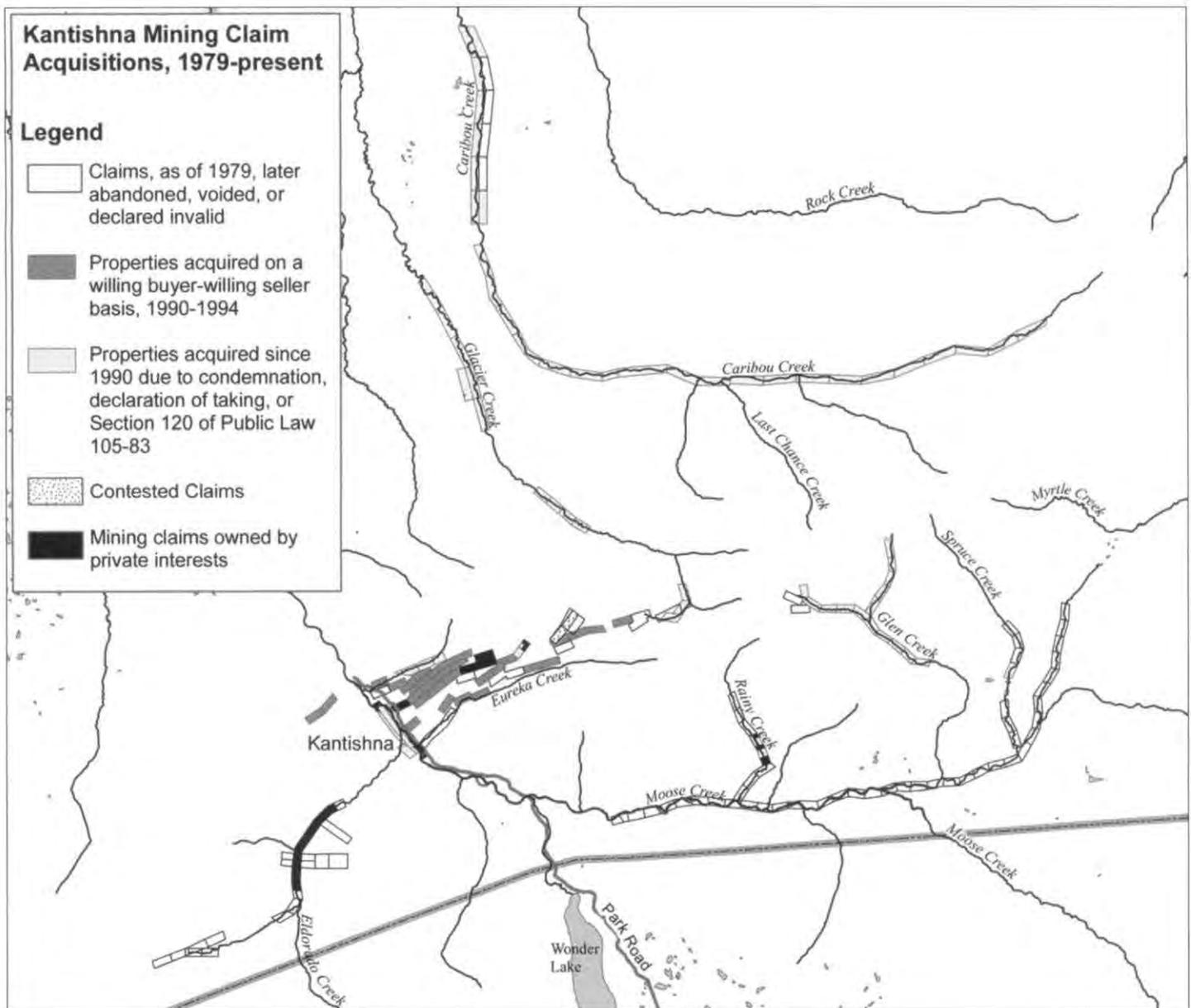
Glacier terminus and 3 placer claims just south of the Ruth Glacier terminus.¹⁷⁷ Again, however, there were relatively few active mining operations. In the Kantishna Hills, as noted above, less than one-third of placer claims and less than one-tenth of lode claims were active.¹⁷⁸ In mineralized areas south of the park, these percentages were even lower: although quite a few claims showed some evidence of minor exploration and survey work, investigators also noted that “there are currently no major mining operations in these areas of the park, and no major mining activity is anticipated in the future. ... little, if any, extraction has occurred.”¹⁷⁹ The report also described the environmental impacts of mining in areas both north and south of the Old Park and discussed a variety of mitigating measures.¹⁸⁰

Soon afterward, the Alaska Land Use Council and the U.S. Interior Department began preparing the reports that ANILCA had mandated. Section 202(3)(b) had called for a wide-ranging environmental report evaluating “the resources of the area, including ... fish and wildlife, public recreation opportunities, wilderness potential, historic resources, and minerals,” all with a December 1983 timetable. Given that direction, the so-called Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study Group (which was composed of 17 employees from four federal and three state agencies) immediately set to work. It asked two NPS biologists to inventory Kantishna Hills’ fish populations and the effects of mining on those populations; it also asked a third NPS biologist to make a similar study on Kantishna Hills’ wildlife. These studies were completed in 1983

and 1984, respectively.¹⁸¹ Funds available to outside investigators, however, were not available until later. Finally, in May 1983, the Department contracted with Salisbury and Dietz, Inc. on a comprehensive study of the mineral potential in both the Kantishna Hills and Dunkle Mine areas. This study included geologic mapping, geochemical and geophysical surveys, placer studies, and the collection and analysis of 2000 core samples retrieved from 22 Kantishna Hills drill holes. The company issued a report of its findings in the spring of 1984.¹⁸²

While biologists and contractors were at work on specialized studies, the study group went to work on a draft environmental impact statement (EIS), the purpose of which was to gather a wide range of scientific data and present various mining-related policy alternatives. In order to meet Congress’s deadline, the document was released in late May 1983. It described the environment of the two study areas, outlined six widely-varying policy alternatives, and analyzed the impact of each alternative on the areas’ environment. Because much of the biological and mining-related data was still being compiled (see above), the draft EIS refrained from suggesting a preferred alternative. The document did, however, provide a structure for upcoming reports.¹⁸³

After the report was issued, the public was given until late July 27, 1983 (later extended to August 27) to comment on the report’s findings. In mid-July, public meetings were held in four Alaska localities, which were attended by a total of more than 200 people. At the Anchor-



Map 9. Kantishna Mining Claim Acquisitions, 1979 to Present

age meeting, the majority of the 70 attendees expressed a preference for having the NPS purchase all of the existing mining claims, but at the other three meetings (at Fairbanks, Healy, and Kantishna), most participants took an opposite tack, stating a preference for having both study areas removed from the park. The study team also asked for written comments. In response, 96 such comments were received, most of which strongly favored the mining-claim-acquisition alternative.¹⁸⁴

During the winter of 1983-84, the Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study Group was hard at work on completing its various reports. The results of that work bore fruit in two separate studies: a series of policy recommendations that the Alaska Land Use Council issued in May 1984 (just one month after Salisbury and Dietz issued its report), and the final EIS, which was issued seven months later.

The Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study Group, which reported its recommendations to the Alaska Land Use Council on May 3, 1984, suggested different directions for the two mineralized areas. Regarding the Dunkle Mine area, the study group recognized that three of the seven agencies recommended Alternative 1, which “would allow mining-related activities to continue on existing valid unpatented placer and lode claims.” The Council also recommended that option, although with the caveat that available data on the area’s mineral resources and its use by the Denali caribou herd “were only marginally sufficient to make the decisions required by ANILCA”.¹⁸⁵ Regarding the more contentious Kantishna Hills area, three of the seven agencies again recommended Alternative 1, the “maintain status quo” alternative. The group, however, apparently bent to the wishes of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, which had recommended that the Interior Department implement



Located on upper Caribou Creek, the remains of a wooden tool shed and a wooden freight wagon (pictured above in 1984) represent historic mining activities including transportation, habitation, maintenance, mining, and mineral processing during the Carrington Company's operations from 1939 to 1948. Claire Roberts Photo, NPS, WAGS Collection

a mineral leasing program beginning during fiscal year 1989. The idea seemed out-of-the-ordinary because it was not described in any of the six alternatives in the draft EIS; in addition, the implementation of a leasing program would require new Congressional legislation. The report noted, however, that “many agency concerns were alleviated by the conditions written into the proposed leasing program, which require that water quality standards and other standards would be attained prior to implementation of the program.”¹⁸⁶ Three weeks later, the Alaska Land Use Council met to consider the study group's recommendations. Recognizing that “it was the obligation of the Council ... to make a recommendation to Congress,” but also noting that “the ultimate action is that of Congress,” the Council voted to concur with the study group's report and recommendations.¹⁸⁷

As soon as the study group's recommendations became known, voices rose up in protest. Federal co-chair Vernon R. Wiggins—the lone Council member who did not concur with the study group's recommendations—wrote a lengthy, impassioned letter denouncing the action, and soon afterward, nine Interior legislators signed a joint letter stating that the proposed action was unworkable. NPS Regional Director Roger Contor, whose agency had advocated a continuation

of the status quo as it pertained to Kantishna Hills mining, carefully noted that the leasing plan was “an acceptable middle ground” worked out by diverse interests. He did not say, however, that he would work to implement the Council's plan. Instead, that decision would depend on the results of the park's general management plan (a draft of which was then being prepared) and on any Congressional action that might be forthcoming. Contor's superiors in the Interior Department, William Horn and G. Ray Arnett, agreed with Wiggins; despite their position as Reagan administration appointees, they objected to the Council's recommendation and instead concluded that “after weighing both mineral and park values, we believe ... that mining [should] be phased out in this area.”¹⁸⁸

The final EIS was completed in December 1984. It was much larger than the May 1983 draft, in part because it incorporated data that had been gathered after the draft report had been completed. The recommendations in this document reflected those that had been published in the May 1984 Alaska Land Use Council report. Consistent with the stance taken by Contor and other NPS officials, however, the agency never issued a record of decision for the document; and the NPS, during its 1985-86 park general management planning process, consistently

In the center of this 1987 aerial view of upper Caribou Creek is the tool shed and wagon (seen in the previous photo) dating from the 1939-1948 mining operations, beyond which is the Hayhurst and Kragness operation dating from 1984-1985. This latter operation, during its brief heyday, processed the largest amount of gravel in the Kantishna District. Mining & Minerals Survey, DENA Cultural Site Files



noted that although “mining on valid existing claims” was “authorized in the park subject to applicable laws and regulations,” the agency “would oppose a significant increase in mining operations,” primarily because of traffic and access-route concerns. Congress, for its part, never responded to the Council’s recommendations by attempting to institute a Kantishna Hills leasing program.¹⁸⁹

The 1985 District Court Injunction and its Impacts

As noted above, the 1976 Mining in the Parks Act stated that in order to operate within the various park units, the owners of patented and unpatented mining claims had to obtain mining plans of operations each year. Regarding mining claims in the Old Park, NPS mining engineers conducted field examinations in 1978 and concluded that none of the 74 claims existing claims passed the validity examinations. This conclusion, in turn, started a process of administrative and legal actions that, by the end of 1986, had resulted in declaring all of these claims null and void.

For mining claims located outside of the Old Park, however, the process was different. As noted above, the hundreds of claims that became part of Denali National Monument in December 1978 were a subset of a much larger number of claims that came under NPS jurisdiction throughout Alaska. These claims, in toto, were so numerous that the incremental approach that the agency had previously taken would take decades to complete. To expedite matters, therefore, the agency authorized temporary approvals for most of those who had submitted complete mining

plans of operation (although it also stated that these approvals “should in no way be construed as a final determination of validity”). Given the cost and complexity of undertaking these final determinations, and the limited budget for validity examinations, the agency in most instances annually renewed these “temporary” mining plans of operations. During and after this period, the Kantishna Hills was the center of mining-related activity, to the exclusion of all other areas in Denali National Park and Preserve.

Given the fact that the most miners, by the early 1980s, were renewing previously-approved operating plans, and given the additional fact that renewal applications were less time-intensive operations than initial applications, most miners willingly (if begrudgingly) followed the necessary bureaucratic steps.¹⁹⁰ (NPS employee Bill Tanner noted that “most of the miners have been very good about submitting plans and talking to us.”) But Jim Fuksa, the owner of the Palmer-based Red Tape Mining Company, however, refused on principle to fill out any forms; he told a ranger that he “didn’t have to do any paper work because his paper work was the constitution.” In early July 1982, moreover, he and an associate illegally bulldozed a 2½-mile-long, 10-foot-wide road to his four Yellow Pup placer claims, located along a Glacier Creek tributary. Confronted on the matter by NPS officials, Fuksa and his colleagues initially chose to continue their mining operations, but on August 2 they finally submitted a mining plan of operations. To stop further damage to area resources, District Court Judge James Fitzgerald—acting on the NPS’s behalf—issued an August 9 temporary restraining order



Claims on Caribou Creek were first staked during the summer of 1905, and the entire length of the creek was subsequently staked for either placer or lode claims. From 1905 to the mining injunction of 1985, a succession of mining techniques was used, each one obliterating some of the physical remains of earlier mining operations. Remains of various mining operations (including the tailings piles seen on left) are shown in this 2007 photo. NPS Photo

against further road construction work, and four days later, the miners agreed to the judge's order. On August 21, Fuksa and his partners agreed to stop any additional mining-related activities until the NPS approved their mining plan of operations. The agency's acting regional director approved that plan just three days later, after which mining resumed.¹⁹¹

The NPS's mining-related regulatory system continued, with few changes, into the mid-1980s. In 1983, for example, NPS officials tentatively approved at least 19 mining plans of operation covering 37 claims, and in 1984 they similarly approved 16 mining plans of operation covering 46 claims.¹⁹² Furthermore, the agency—following access guidelines set forth in Section 1110(b) of ANILCA—granted the Kantishna Mining Company a permit to construct a 12½-mile access route between the park road and the company's Caribou Creek claims. (Company officials con-

structed this road, now known as Skyline Drive, in 1983.)¹⁹³

During this period, from 1979 to the mid-1980s, the agency's primary area of concern dealt with reclamation. The miners' various plans of operation promised specified reclamation activities, but agency field observers noted, all too often, that reclamation was implemented either poorly or not at all.¹⁹⁴ So to ensure a closer broader compliance, the NPS in the spring of 1985 initiated a bonding program, effective immediately, with a minimum bond of \$200. Agency officials told claimants and operators that "reclamation progress will be monitored throughout and after the mining season and will be approved or rejected, thus releasing a portion, all or none of the bond obligation."¹⁹⁵

Then, in July 1985, an Anchorage judge dropped a bombshell that effectively forced the closure of mining in Alaska's NPS units. On July 22, Dis-



Shown above is a part of the 2½-mile-long road, illegally bulldozed in 1982, which connected the Yellow Pup placer claims (in the Glacier Creek drainage) to the park road. NPS Photo

trict Court Judge James A. von der Heydt issued a preliminary injunction in a suit that had been filed on May 8 by three Alaska-based environmental groups. During June 21 oral arguments, the plaintiffs had alleged that the NPS had a mandatory duty (based on agency regulations is-

sued in response to the 1976 Mining in the Parks Act) to review the environmental impacts of each mining operation it approved, but in seven years the agency had "not once prepared an environmental assessment." The judge, siding with the plaintiffs, noted that mining in Alaska's park



Access from the park road at Kantishna to Glacier and Caribou Creeks was over low country northwest of the Kantishna Hills. Mining equipment and vehicles were used to get through the boggy ground and a maze of trails developed, especially in the early 1980s, as seen in this 1983 photo. NPS Photo

Following access guidelines set forth in ANILCA, the NPS permitted the construction of a 12½ mile access route between the park road and mining claims on Caribou Creek. This 1983 view shows Skyline Drive construction (dark cut on right side of photo) in progress in the upper headwaters of Glacier Creek. John Dalle-Molle Photo, Resource Management Slide File, NPS



units was causing “major adverse effects on fish habitat, water quality and scenic values” and was producing “wastewater discharges that grossly exceed water quality standards.” Given those conditions, he ordered all park mining to be shut down “until such time as adequate environmental studies have been prepared and proper access permits issued.”

An NPS spokesperson, upon hearing the decision, defended the agency’s course of action. She stated that in all lands that had been under jurisdiction only since 1978, the agency had “attempted to phase in regulations so as not to place an unreasonable burden on the miners who had been working in this area.” “Every year since 1980,” she noted, “the park service has tightened up enforcement of the mining regulations, requiring more detailed plans of operations and increased compliance with state and federal regulations,” but if the NPS had “enforced the law to the letter in 1980 it would have effectively closed down every mining operation.”¹⁹⁶

Von der Heydt’s injunction applied to approximately 40 mining operations in seven Alaska park units and gave operators 45 days—until September 4—to cease all mining operations. NPS officials told them that after that date, only reclamation work would be permitted. As for miners’ long-term prospects, officials promised to contact them “within 60 days with information on the Court’s order and its effect on the 1986 mining season.” And at two parks, the judge imposed an additional hurdle; because most mining activity (and most environmental

degradation) had taken place at the Wrangell-St. Elias and Yukon-Charley Rivers park units, the judge disallowed future mining in those park units “until adequate environmental impact statements have been prepared that study the cumulative environmental effects of mining in those parks.”¹⁹⁷ Five months later, after further prodding from environmental groups, von der Heydt added Denali to that list. Shortly after the Denali ruling, a Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund attorney explained that “the Park Service cannot intelligently decide [on individual mining operations] until they get a look at the whole picture. ... for example ... there might be a need for fewer roads and access routes into mining claims once the park service looks at the entire area, instead of considering individual mines.” But an Alaska Miners Association representative, stung by the ruling, stated that its practical impact would be to put hundreds of miners—owners of inactive claims as well as active miners—out of work in 1986 and perhaps longer than that.¹⁹⁸

Most miners—feeling that they had little choice in the matter—finished up their work that season and reconciled themselves to waiting things out until the bureaucratic process had run its course. Not everyone gave up so easily, however. In July 1985, the Gold King claimants (brothers Eric and Paul Weiler) decided to continue mining even though the NPS had suspended their mining plan of operations. The agency, perhaps to countermand the notion that it was lax in its rules enforcement, cited one of the brothers (Eric Weiler) for mining without an approved mining plan of operations. After a September 18 court trial,

District Court Magistrate John D. Roberts ruled that Weiler was guilty.¹⁹⁹ Another miner who did not give up was Sam Koppenberg, who applied for a mining plan of operations in 1986 for his Caribou Creek claims and came close to getting it approved. Technical difficulties intervened, however, and the agency was unable to approve any Kantishna-area mining plans of operations for the remainder of the 1980s.²⁰⁰

In response to the judge's mandate, NPS Director William Mott, in late 1985 approved the establishment of a new Minerals Management Division in the Alaska Regional Office in Anchorage. Soon afterward Floyd Sharrock was selected as the division chief, and several new employees were hired to staff the division. In order to complete the Denali study, the park in 1986 hired an environmental specialist and a geologist.²⁰¹ That spring, it began work on an EIS on the cumulative impacts of mining in the Kantishna area, and in pursuit of that goal, a large field camp was operated out of a base camp at the Stampede Mine airstrip. For the following two years, Moose Creek Camp was located near the Friday Creek confluence, just southeast of the Kantishna Airstrip. Out of those camps worked a wide variety of geologists, biologists, archeologists, and other specialists; they, in turn, worked with park headquarters staff and with other agency staff based in Anchorage and Denver.²⁰²

In the midst of gathering data for this study, and for similar studies for the Wrangell-St. Elias and Yukon-Charley park units, the planning process took shape. In September 1986, three scoping meetings were held around the state; officials at these meetings informed the public about what the agency was undertaking and asked the public which issues the EIS should address. Later, in March 1988, the NPS sponsored two more scoping meetings, where the public was asked to help define the range of alternatives.²⁰³

The NPS completed its draft EIS and made it available to the public in mid-April 1989. It offered four alternatives: a no-action alternative, two similar alternatives in which new mining plans of operations would be evaluated against a series of identified "target" resources, and a fourth alternative which called for the agency to develop a mining claim acquisition plan so that the agency could acquire all patented and valid unpatented mining claims in the park and preserve. The agency, in the draft EIS for all three park units, stated that its proposed action called for the preparation of resource protection goals for riparian wildlife, fish, grizzly bear, black bear, moose, caribou, and wolf. Given those goals,

mining plans of operation could be denied if any of those goals could not be met because of the potential effects of a proposed mining operation. And in cases where the agency was unable to approve a mining plan of operations, it stated that it would pursue acquisition of the claims by purchase, exchange, or donation.²⁰⁴

In mid-May, the agency held public hearings on the draft EIS in Anchorage and Fairbanks. The deadline for public comments, originally set for mid-June, was extended until August 14 due to public requests in the matter.²⁰⁵ The NPS received a total of 17 oral and 54 written comments. Of those, not one comment called for the adoption of the agency's proposed draft alternative; instead, a solid majority (41 of the 71) organizational and individual comments urged the NPS to adopt a new alternative that called for the NPS to acquire all patented and valid unpatented mining claims. Given those responses, Regional Director Boyd Evison chose the acquisition route as the agency's preferred alternative, not only for Denali but for the Wrangell-St. Elias and Yukon-Charley Rivers park units as well. These plans, dated April 1990, were made available to the public in early June. On August 21, Evison signed a record of decision that implemented the document's recommendations.²⁰⁶

The NPS's stance, of fully supporting the acquisition of all valid mining claims in the Kantishna area, was a startling about-face to the position it had taken just six years earlier. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, neither the agency's overall management policies nor the regulations that were issued after ANILCA's passage called for the acquisition of mining claims in the new or expanded Alaska park units, except on a willing seller-willing buyer basis. As noted above, the first inkling of the agency's attitude toward mining claim acquisition appeared in 1983-84 during its participation in the Alaska Land Use Council's preparation of the Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine study report. The NPS's draft EIS, released in May 1983, stated that the acquisition of the 34 patented claims and 194 unpatented claims in the two study areas would cost between \$3 million and \$6 million. It also stated that the acquisition of all mining claims would be one of six policy alternatives. Neither the NPS nor the council, however, chose a preferred alternative at that time.²⁰⁷ During the ensuing year, a consulting firm compiled an acquisition cost study for the two study areas; this firm determined that acquiring these claims would be considerably higher than the NPS had estimated: \$86.5 million to acquire the patented claims and another \$70.7 million for the unpatented claims, for a total acquisition cost of \$157.2



Joe Quigley was one of the first prospectors to stake lode claims in the Kantishna District. Shown above is his Red Top Mine in 1923 when about 102 tons of silver-lead ore (foreground) was mined and stacked, ready to be transported to the Alaska Railroad. Brooks Collection, 68-32-486, University of Alaska Fairbanks Archive

million. Perhaps based on the considerable costs involved, the NPS (represented by its regional director, Roger Contor) recommended that the full council choose the “maintain status quo” option, which called for claim acquisition to “occur only on a willing seller – willing buyer or donation basis except in cases where it could be determined that mining would significantly and adversely affect park lands.” For reasons stated above, the council voted to choose the “maintain status quo” option for the Dunkle Mine area, but for the Kantishna Hills, it voted to implement a mineral leasing plan.²⁰⁸

Regional Director Roger Contor, in the wake of the council’s vote, noted on the one hand that the council’s recommendation was an “acceptable middle ground,” but he also stated that the agency’s long-term recommendation would be made in the park’s general management plan, which was then being compiled. Consistent with his earlier recommendation, he opined that the agency’s plan “probably will seek to allow only current mining to continue, as well as the purchase of existing claims when they become available.”²⁰⁹ NPS Director Russ Dickenson, upon hearing the council’s Kantishna Hills recommendation, stated that he hoped to see the NPS gradually phase out mining and possibly buy out some claims. “Where compensation is required, fine,” he said.²¹⁰ And in a surprise move, two high officials in the Reagan administration’s Interior Department agreed with Dickenson; G. Ray Arnett and William Horn stated that “it is in

the public interest as well as sound park management and resource protection that mining be phased out in this area.”²¹¹

During the 1985–86 process that resulted in the park’s general management plan, the agency took a more protective stance than Contor had predicted in June 1984. The plan stated that “patented and unpatented claims may continue to operate, subject to federal mineral management regulations.” The agency, however, would “use existing authorities to minimize the adverse effects of ongoing mining activities. Validity determinations for unpatented claims will be completed as quickly as possible to determine status. Wherever new mining activity might introduce development into a previously undisturbed area, the National Park Service will acquire the mineral properties in fee title, through donation, exchange, or purchase.” The agency’s newly aggressive stance was due, in part, to worries that patented, Kantishna-area mining claims might be used for new visitor facilities. So “to avoid this potential for adverse effects,” the plan called for the agency to “seek to acquire, through purchase, donation, or exchange, the surface estates to [all] mining properties to preclude large-scale recreational development.” The accompanying land protection plan called for the purchase of the surface estate of 41 patented lode claims; the outright purchase of 2 other patented lode claims (located along the west side of Moose Creek); and the purchase of 65 unpatented Kantishna-area claims, from three



A 35-ton-per-day flotation mill was constructed on the Red Top mine site in 1973. This was used to process 120 tons of silver ore from a nearby claim. The operation was discontinued after one season. Bryan Swift Photo, NPS, WAGS Collection

different owners, pending the results of validity examinations.²¹²

Evidence of the agency's use of "existing authorities to minimize the adverse effects of ongoing mining activities" (see above) was not long in coming. NPS mining personnel took a renewed look at the language of the Bureau of Land Management's May 1965 withdrawal. They soon found that although the Interior Board of Land Appeals had already adjudicated the legality of those claims filed before May 1965, no determinations had yet been made of the 28 claims from within the withdrawal boundaries that had been made after that date. In response, the NPS's regional director asked the BLM to adjudicate those claims. The BLM did so, and in April 1987 it issued a decision in the matter. Just one of those claims was fully legitimate; another six were partially null and void, and the remaining 21 claims were fully null and void. The BLM's investigation was a considerable help to the NPS's ongoing efforts to ascertain the ownership patterns of Kantishna-area claims.²¹³

During the late 1980s, the NPS's stance became even more protective during the process that resulted in the EIS pertaining to the cumulative impacts of Kantishna-area mining. In the summer of 1987, agency geologists began conducting validity examinations on placer and lode claims throughout the Kantishna area, and in 1988, "work went forward on amending the Land Protection Plan" (which was incorporated into the mining EIS) "so that it would be possible to eventually purchase all patented and unpatented

claims in Kantishna."²¹⁴ The draft EIS which was issued in the spring of 1989 (see above) stopped short of recommending a land-acquisition option. Instead, its recommended alternative stated that mining plans of operation would be issued only if that mining operation did not prevent the attainment of a broad series of resource protection goals. And if a mining operation could not avoid causing "unacceptable damage," the agency "would pursue acquisition of the mining claims by purchase, exchange, or donation."²¹⁵ By the end of 1989, however, the NPS—either in response to public opinion or because the system it had proposed in the draft EIS was deemed unwieldy—had changed its position; it now intended "to acquire the patented lands and unpatented mining claims in Kantishna through fee purchase." That position was reflected in the final EIS, which was completed and distributed in the spring of 1990.²¹⁶

During the period between the issuance of the mining injunction and the completion of the mining EIS, private interests continued to be active in the Kantishna area. As noted in previous chapters, Camp Denali had opened its doors to guests in June 1952, and in late 1975 Wally and Jerri Cole acquired it. Gary Crabb, who owned the McKinley Village complex, opened a second area hostelry, the North Face Lodge, in 1973. But during the 1980s, proprietors Roberta Wilson and Dan Ashbrook gradually improved the property adjacent to the old (1919) Kantishna Roadhouse, and by the late 1980s the site offered a dining room, bar, lounge, and library along with modern cedar cabins. In 1987,

In 1991 the NPS purchased the Red Top claim and most of the mill was removed. An initial site clean-up, including hazardous materials assessment and barrel removal, was conducted in 1993. Visitor accessibility combined with unsafe high walls, habitat degradation, impaired water quality and visually offensive views combined to place this abandoned mine site as one of the park's top priorities for restoration activities. Kenneth F. Karle Collection



Camp Denali's owners purchased the North Face Lodge, and two years later, Gary and Danae Kroll opened the Denali Mountain Lodge, a 24-cabin complex located along Moose Creek near the Kantishna Airstrip.²¹⁷

Among miners, however, operations largely stopped. The NPS, otherwise occupied with compiling the mining-related EIS, allowed miners continued access to their mining claims.

They issued documents that allowed them to remove their equipment, and from at least one miner, they obtained a contract for gravel extraction. But some miners, upset at both the judge and the Park Service, chafed at their enforced idleness. During the summer of 1987, for example, NPS field crews "had to endure various forms of harassment from the locals," and the owners of one claim carved out an unauthorized road and worked on their claim until cited by



Heavy equipment was used in 1999 for the Red Top mine restoration project, including installation of an adit drain and drainage treatment tank, and recontouring of the mine and mill area. The tall trees just beyond the former Red Top mine site, as seen in this 2007 photo, indicate the former cabin location of Fannie and Joe Quigley. NPS Photo

a ranger.²¹⁸ But the overall mood was quiet, as noted in an April 1990 *Alaska Magazine* article:

Mining in Denali National Park remains indefinitely suspended until the park service completes its studies and presents its findings in federal court. ... Not surprisingly, most of Kantishna's miners chose not to wait around. Many relocated or retired, but some less fortunate gold seekers were driven to bankruptcy. ... [According to one Kantishna-area resident,] "Out of 13 [mining] operations, 11 went bankrupt."²¹⁹

Developing and Implementing a Buyout Plan

As noted above, the agency's preferred alternative for the mining EIS called for the NPS to develop an acquisition plan to acquire all patented and valid unpatented mining claims in the park unit. The agency, at that time, estimated that the current gross value of the park's patented and unpatented mining claims was between \$16.5 million and \$21.5 million, although it also recognized that the total acquisition costs would exceed those figures due to various administrative costs. (Miners, however, countered that the claims were worth \$150 million or more.)²²⁰ Anticipating the need for buyout funds, the Alaska Congressional delegation assisted the process. They requested a list of all Kantishna area inholdings and an areawide management plan. The NPS, in response, completed a *Kantishna Resource Management Plan* and submitted it to Congress in early July 1990, and by late July the Senate had approved \$6 million for land acquisition purposes. Shortly after the NPS signed the record of decision, the House of Representatives chipped in with a like amount, to be withdrawn from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for the acquisition of Kantishna mining claims from willing sellers. By the end of the year the agency was on the verge of spending some \$3 million from that allotment, and officials estimated that to complete the buyout process, \$6 million would be needed annually for the next five years.²²¹ In 1991, park officials completed their "first major purchase of prioritized real estate," a 329-acre tract of patented mining properties on Quigley Ridge from Leo Mark Anthony.²²²

Meanwhile, miners did their best to actively operate their claims. The August 1990 decision that approved the eventual mining-claim buyout also stated that "until such time as funds are available for acquisition, the NPS will process mining plans of operations, amendments or modifications to existing mining plans..."²²³ A month later, NPS attorneys filed a motion to

dissolve the five-year-old mining injunction, and although environmental groups opposed that motion, the district court approved the motion and on January 2, 1991 the injunction was lifted. Meanwhile, environmental groups appealed the district court's decision to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, but in April 1992 the appeals court affirmed the lower court's decision and allowed both the resumption of mining activity (according to stipulations laid out in the recently-completed EIS) and the implementation of the EIS's provisions.²²⁴ Soon afterward, operators submitted six mining plans of operations to the NPS, and by the end of 1991 two had been found "potentially approvable."²²⁵ Those two operators, however, showed little interest in working under the NPS's proposed arrangement. As a result, no Kantishna miners started up during this period; no commercial mining, in fact, has taken place anywhere in Denali National Park and Preserve since the end of the 1985 season.²²⁶

As noted in Chapter 9, claimholder Dan Ashbrook brought considerable consternation to NPS officials during the summer of 1990 when he and his fiancée, Valerie Mundt, opened a recreational vehicle campground with "pioneer cabins" (wall tents) on one of his Moose Creek claims. Ashbrook had begun working at Kantishna as a tenant miner in 1959 and had acquired his first claims in the early 1960s; as noted above, he had first come to the attention of NPS officials in late 1969, when he helped haul a "cat train" from Wonder Lake to the Slippery Creek claims over an unauthorized route. In need of income, and because the 1985 court injunction prevented him from mining his Moose Creek claims, he and Mundt operated the campground throughout the 1990 summer season as a new way to generate revenues. In July of that year, he denied that his campground venture was intended to spur Congress and the NPS to purchase his claim. But two months later, Ashbrook—recognizing that both economics and politics was preventing him from profiting from the campground, and also recognizing that Congress was finalizing a buyout plan—indicated a willingness to sell some or all of his claims.²²⁷

Beginning in 1991, a host of new would-be miners appeared on the scene as a result of actions taken by the State of Alaska. Perhaps spurred on by the states' rights rhetoric of Governor Wally Hickel, who had been elected in 1990, state water officials in 1991 asserted that Moose Creek (the primary Kantishna-area waterway) was navigable. And because the Alaska Statehood Act noted that the state government had control of navigable rivers up to the high-water line, Division of Mining officials concluded that they were

Eureka Creek, originally staked in 1905, had intermittent placer mining occurring at its mouth and along the entire length of the creek until 1985. This photograph shows the park road crossing at Eureka Creek and mining activities shortly before the 1985 mining injunction, including a recent bench cut on the right. NPS Photo



authorized to issue mining permits for operations taking place in the Moose Creek riverbed. The Division therefore issued its first mining permit, to a Slana resident, in September 1991, and by the following spring, permits had also been issued to two Fairbanks residents. National Park Service officials, however, disputed the state's authority to issue these permits. It asserted that Moose Creek was not navigable and was therefore under federal control. Park officials, recognizing that local miners lacked a Corps of Engineers permit, stated that they would stop anyone who planned to haul mining equipment down the park road; according to acting superintendent Linda Toms, "I denied that access and will continue to deny it." None of these permittees, as a result, mined along Moose Creek that summer. Hickel administration officials later withdrew their claims to ownership of the creek, after which they issued a mineral closing order for state lands throughout the park unit.²²⁸

Throughout the first half of the 1990s, the NPS continued its program of buying Kantishna-area mining claims on a willing-buyer, willing-seller basis. The program, however, proved less than successful after 1991, primarily because there were relatively few claims owned by willing sellers that were not clouded by bankruptcy or title problems. Another sticking point was the widely varying perceptions of what the various claims were worth; a Bureau of Mines contractor, for example, determined that one group of 13 unpatented claims was worth \$18.6 million, but an NPS appraiser concluded that the same properties were worth just \$172,000, which was less than

one percent of the contractor's estimate. Given these problems, some of the \$12 million that the NPS had received was paid out to mining claimants. But according to one conservation group, much of the remainder was spent on "back-ground work," and the purchasing process got bogged down. Despite those difficulties, the NPS by the spring of 1995 had purchased approximately 500 acres in the Kantishna area, which included 24 patented claims and one unpatented claim.²²⁹ At that time, the agency estimated that it was still interested in purchasing about 14 patented claims (of about 280 acres) and 4,300 acres of unpatented claims.²³⁰

Both the NPS and Congress recognized that the sluggish process needed to be streamlined. In October 1994, the so-called Denali Task Force (see Chapter 9) reiterated the need to acquire "development rights and/or property" at Kantishna, but it also urged the NPS to "expedite the purchase of mining claims and patented land, including implementation of new acquisition methods."²³¹ Pressure to improve the system also came from Sen. Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska), who introduced the Denali Mining Claims Act of 1994 on October 7. Murkowski, based on the results of a November 1993 public hearing, stated that "Government regulations and procedures" were preventing further mining at Kantishna. Recognizing that new mining was unlikely, however, his bill provided a three-step process to streamline claims purchase, one that "would provide a balanced approach to determining mineral and land values within a reasonable time frame." Given the impending adjournment of

Eighty years of mining disturbances to Eureka Creek were so extensive that the potential for ecosystem recovery through natural processes was significantly hindered. Consequently, restoration of Eureka Creek was placed at the top of park priorities. Included in this project was removal of abandoned mining camp equipment, as seen in this 1999 photograph taken at the mouth of Eureka Creek. Kenneth F. Karle Collection



the 103rd Congress, Murkowski knew that his bill had scant chances for passage. He submitted it, however, “to give interested parties an opportunity to comment on it” and because it could be re-introduced at any later date should administrative avenues fail.²³²

In response to Murkowski’s bill, Assistant Interior Secretary George Frampton, together with NPS Regional Director Robert Barbee, assembled the Denali Mining Claim Acquisition Task Group, which was comprised of four agency staff, all located outside of Alaska. The group spent a week in mid-March 1995 meeting with Alaska agency staff, property owners, and mining-industry representatives, seeking ways to accelerate the acquisition of Kantishna-area mining claims. Goaded by the senator, who vowed that he would reintroduce his bill if necessary, the task group produced a June 1995 report that offered six separate recommendations. (The report declared that “there likely is not a single approach to acquisition that will be successful in all cases. Thus, it is recommended that several approaches be developed and implemented.”)²³³ But because no immediate follow-up action took place, some miners made a renewed attempt to mine their properties. In 1996, for example, miners submitted eight mining plans of operations. NPS officials, in response, stated that all were “deficient at some level,” although one operating plan came close to being implemented. In 1997, the agency reported that it had purchased about 1,500 acres of Kantishna claims since the buyout program had begun; in addition, it had received two offers to sell (39 acres total), while another 44 acres

were being processed for purchase.²³⁴ During the 1995-97 period, the agency also compiled and completed its *Front Country Development Concept Plan*; the recommendations in both the draft and final plans called for the NPS “to acquire development rights and/or property to retain the existing character and approximate level of use at Kantishna” and to “implement administrative changes to expedite acquisition of Kantishna mining claims.”²³⁵

During stream channel and floodplain restoration work on lower Eureka Creek, shown above in 1999, about 500 feet of the creek received bank stabilization treatment, involving installation of rows of coconut-fiber biologs. These logs were staked and anchored at channel edges along the outside of the newly created stream bends. Kenneth F. Karle Collection



Reclamation activities were completed on lower Eureka Creek in September 1999. The mouth of Eureka Creek is seen here from the park road in 2007. Kenneth F. Karle Collection



In mid-1997, Congress moved to get the acquisitions program moving again. In early July 1997, Rep. Ralph Regula (R-Ohio) introduced the 1998 Interior Department Appropriations Act. Just two weeks later, this bill passed the House, and during this time, the bill had no Denali-specific provisions. While it was being considered by the Senate Appropriations Committee, however, Sen. Ted Stevens inserted a provision pertaining to the Kantishna buyout. This provision, which was in large part consistent with the recommendations of the 1995 acquisitions task force, stated that owners of either patented claims or valid unpatented claims could voluntarily agree to sell their claims to the U.S. government via an expedited process. Stevens's provision stated that for those who took part in this process, the U.S. government would assume ownership of all patented and unpatented claims. The government agreed to "pay just compensation" to all claim owners, payment of which "shall be in the amount of a negotiated settlement of the value of such property or the valuation of such property awarded by judgment." The provision, moreover, provided a specified, legally-proven avenue by which the government would determine "just compensation."²³⁶ As David Whitney from the *Anchorage Daily News* phrased it, the provision

will create a process by which title to more than 3,000 acres of claims in the Kantishna Mining District could be transferred in a matter of weeks to the National Park Service. Claimants

will then head into federal court to seek compensation for the "legislative taking" of their property rights. Although the system is voluntary, the expectation is that most claim owners will opt for the speedier resolution of the Park Service's cumbersome administrative process for buying them out of the park.

The provision was well received by all parties. Interior Department and NPS staff praised the effort, a Sierra Club representative thanked Senator Stevens for "working in behalf of both the claimants and the public interest," and an attorney for one of the claimants stated that "this is about as good a resolution to this problem as one could come up with."²³⁷

After its approval by the Appropriations Committee, the Interior Department funding bill was brought before the Senate, which passed it on September 18. A month later the bill emerged from a Senate-House conference, and President Clinton signed it into law on November 14. Stevens's provision, during this period, underwent several minor changes, but the core of his proposed program, known as Section 120, remained in the final bill. Its language called for Kantishna-area claimholders to indicate their interest in the program by February 12, 1998. For participating claimholders, title to the claims would transfer to the federal government on that date. According to an NPS report,

There would then be an opportunity to reach negotiated settlements for payment for the claims taken, with either party being allowed to sue in the U.S. District Court in Alaska to determine the property's value. If suit is filed, the estimated compensation would promptly be deposited with the Court for the owner's availability, with the final amount established by negotiated settlement or court award.²³⁸

By the February 12 deadline, the owners of five of the seven large blocks of unpatented mining claims had consented to the legislative takings process. All told, these blocks comprised approximately 1,749 acres. Several holders of small-acreage claim groups joined the process as well, for a total of approximately 1,885 acres. By July 1999, more than two-thirds of this acreage had been acquired. (The remaining acreage was being held up due to the need for bankruptcy-court approval or because of unclear title.) Four other claim holders, who together held approximately 1,220 acres of claims, did not participate in the legislative takings process.²³⁹

Since that time, the agency has continued to work with various Kantishna-area claimholders, those who did not take part in the legislative takings process as well as those who did. Given the agency's overall goal of obtaining as much Kantishna-area acreage as possible, it has largely succeeded in that effort. As of mid-2007, less than one-half square mile of land formerly held by Kantishna-area mining claimants was held by private parties. Non-NPS mining interests included eleven parcels, totaling 113.73 acres, of patented lands, and one unpatented placer mining claim group (all or part of six claims) totaling 118.22 acres.²⁴⁰

Stampede Mine: Earl Pilgrim,

the University of Alaska, and the U.S. Army

As noted above, Earl Pilgrim acquired a major antimony mine along Stampede Creek during the mid-1930s, and for a few years before the U.S. entered World War II, Stampede Mine was the territory's largest antimony producer. Transportation between the mine and the railroad, however, was slow and expensive, so Pilgrim made numerous attempts to obtain road access. Between 1942 and 1957, he tried at least four times to convince NPS officials to have a road built from the airstrip over to the Toklat River corridor and up to the park road. All of these attempts failed. In 1960, he was successful in convincing the new State of Alaska to fund the construction of a pioneer road between Lignite (on the Alaska Railroad) and his mine. But the route was laid

out so poorly that commercial traffic never traveled over the road corridor.

Pilgrim's mine produced antimony ore in 1964 and again in 1969-70. After that, however, the mine closed due to a drop in antimony values and rising labor costs. And as a 1977 report noted, Pilgrim "remained at the mine where he lived practically alone, occupying himself with small tasks.... This charming gentleman, aged 85, used his free time to become a friend of the country wildlife." The report further stated that except for the "not entirely installed" Humphrey spiral, the mill equipment was an estimated 40 years old. But "nevertheless, in spite of its aspect, the plant seems in good enough condition to be reopened after some transformations and repairs."²⁴¹

Pilgrim hoped, in 1977, "to receive some financial aid to reopen the mine." But in December 1978, less than a month after the mine became part of Denali National Monument, the former University of Alaska mining professor sold his interests in the mine and mill to Stampede Mine, Ltd., which was headed by Edwin K. Dole (who was an heir to the Dole pineapple fortune). The new owners tried but failed to reactivate the operation. As historian William Brown notes, this may have been because Pilgrim

was a genius at improvisation. One who knew him figured that he could fashion a moving part from a chunk of rock, if necessary. Machines, circuits, piping, and tools were interlocked with the personality of the man at the



Earl Pilgrim, age 87, was photographed outside his cabin at the Stampede Mine in the fall of 1979. Linda S. Barb Collection

Stampede Mine site. [After he sold out,] the new company sent in its by-the-book engineers; they simply could not make the place run. Without Earl Pilgrim's personal coaxing, all of these ingenious hookups and fabrications refused to mesh into the system that he had made.

In December 1979, therefore, the new firm donated its real estate interests to the NPS and its buildings, facilities, and mineral rights to the University of Alaska. Under the term of the donation, the NPS and the university promised to cooperatively use the site as a mining study area, where more efficient and environmentally sound mining methods might be investigated.²⁴² Although the university's School of Mineral Industries played a key role in acquiring the site, it probably held only one summer field camp there, perhaps because university officials had a poor understanding of NPS laws and regulations. In 1984, the five-year-old agreement lapsed.²⁴³

In March 1987, the two parties signed a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining their various roles and responsibilities, and soon afterward, the NPS invited the U.S. Army's Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit (from Fort Richardson) to the mine in order to remove a major explosives dump that had long been stored at the mill. The NPS and the Army, however, poorly communicated the specific procedures to be followed. On April 30 the Army officials, apparently miscalculating the size and capabilities of the accumulated explosives,

ignited a major explosion that severely damaged the mill. The blast demolished the nearby assay building and shed, and it seriously impacted a bunkhouse that was 250 feet away from the detonation site.²⁴⁴

The aftermath of the explosion was an uncomfortable time for both the NPS and the Army. Blasting officer Mike Shields, who has written the most comprehensive analysis of the event, stated that there was "a rapidly growing political fire, with lots of finger-pointing: the NPS said the Army screwed up; the Army said the NPS misinformed them all along the line; the press said the NPS purposely destroyed the place ... because they 'hate miners and mining'; UAF said the NPS purposely destroyed the place to prevent mining classes being held there; [and] letters to editors said the NPS ... should have known those Army kids are too young to know anything about explosives." Later, a more detailed investigation took place that was geared toward ensuring that such an accident would never be repeated. It ushered in a successful series of procedures that NPS and other agency specialists have employed at abandoned mining sites throughout the state.²⁴⁵

In early 1989, the NPS re-examined the site and suggested four preservation alternatives; it eventually opted for site cleanup, stabilization, and preservation planning. Later that year, agency staff conducted a site cleanup and emergency stabilization work, and three years later an NPS restoration specialist conducted a condition assessment of the mill building. The university,



The Stampede Mine ball mill, pictured above in 1983, was constructed in 1939. NPS Photo

This view of the Stampede Mine mill and lower camp was taken on May 19, 1987, shortly after the April 30 explosion that demolished the mill and the nearby assay building, and seriously impacted other structures at the site. Resource Management Slide File, NPS



during this period, based a geology field camp out of tents located at the mine's airstrip, but the Bureau of Land Management in 1990 declared UAF's unpatented mining claims in the area (seven lode claims and two placer claims) abandoned and void because it failed to file the necessary paperwork.²⁴⁶ The second NPS-university MOU expired in 1992 and was not renewed.

In February 1994, Pete Rutledge from the University of Alaska contacted NPS officials about two matters: agency requirements for conducting field programs at the Stampede Mine area and, alternatively, requirements for the NPS purchasing the university's mineral rights at the site. The agency responded to one of Rutledge's areas of interest by hiring an appraiser, who visited the university's 70.63-acre parcel during the summer of 1994.²⁴⁷

University mining-department officials, apparently angry that the NPS was not showing an interest in allowing continued use of the mine area, then sought help from U.S. Senator Frank Murkowski, who in July 1994 inserted a key paragraph into the Senate's 1995 Interior Department appropriations bill. That amendment called for the NPS to "enter into negotiations regarding a memorandum of understanding for the continued use of the Stampede Creek Mine property...". In addition, it provided \$250,000 to "undertake an assessment of damage and provide [Congress, by May 1, 1995] cost estimates for the reconstruction of those facilities and equipment which were damaged or destroyed as a result of the [1987] incident...". Finally, the paragraph

called on the NPS to work with UAF "to winterize equipment and materials" that had been "exposed to the environment as a result of the April 30, 1987 incident." Murkowski's insertion was successfully incorporated into the appropriation bill that passed the Senate. Similar language, however, was not included in the House version of that bill, and Murkowski's provision did not survive the House-Senate conference and was thus not signed into law.²⁴⁸

Despite the failure of Murkowski's amendment, the NPS sent staff to the site during the summer of 1995 to develop information necessary to work cooperatively with the university to further its educational goals. But Murkowski, who was the chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources in the newly Republican-dominated Senate, made a renewed attempt to insert the previous year's amendment. His amendment, in August 1995, was successfully incorporated into the Senate's 1996 Interior Department appropriation bill. That amendment, however, suffered the same fate as before; the House bill had no similar language, and the amendment was dropped during House-Senate conference negotiations.²⁴⁹

Two years later, Murkowski tried yet again to work out a deal that would assist UAF with its interests in the Stampede Mine site, and this time it worked – although in a far different way than he had envisioned in 1994 and 1995. In mid-September 1997, he inserted an amendment into the Interior Department's 1998 appropriations bill that paved the way for the NPS to purchase



What remains of the Stampede Mine mill structure is shown here in 2003, looking down on the ruins and Stampede Creek below the mill. NPS Photo

the university's interests in the Stampede Mine site. That amendment, which was approved on an 81-14 vote, also called on both the U.S. Army and the NPS to assist the university in establishing a new field school at the Golden Zone Mine. (This long-abandoned mine, which was 5 miles southwest of the old Dunkle Mine, was just outside of Denali National Park.) The Senate passed this bill on September 18, and with slight modifications it survived the conference committee and reached the desk of President Clinton, who signed the bill into law on November 14. Shortly thereafter, the NPS—following the law's provisions—began negotiating with UAF's School of Mineral Engineering on an equitable purchase price, and on September 22, 1998, the NPS bought the university's limited mineral interest in its 70.65-acre parcel. Since that time, field crews have hauled away university-owned improvements, rehabilitated various mine buildings, and surveyed the area for hazardous materials.²⁵⁰

Kantishna-area Reclamation Activities

The park-specific mining regulations that the NPS authorized in the early 1930s, and implemented in the late 1940s, made no provisions for site reclamation. But the Mining in the Parks Act, which became law in September 1976, stated in its opening paragraphs that "all mining areas of the National Park System should be conducted so as to prevent or minimize damage to the environment and other resource values." Based on that concept, the accompanying regulations

(issued in interim form in November 1976 and in final form in January 1977) demanded that all active mining operators conform to specific reclamation requirements. The goal of mining reclamation was to provide

for the safe movement of native wildlife, the reestablishment of native vegetative communities, the normal flow of surface and reasonable flow of subsurface waters, the return of the area to a condition which does not jeopardize visitor safety or public use of the unit, and return of the area to a condition equivalent to its pristine beauty.

Reclamation was to be in accordance with methods set out in the approved mining plan of operations, and was expected to be completed within six months after the operator finished his work. In addition to reclaiming land that they were currently working, operators who held previously-issued special use permits were also expected to honor the terms of those permits as they related to reclamation requirements.²⁵¹

As noted above, the passage of the Mining in the Parks Act imposed a four-year moratorium on the disturbance of new lands for mineral exploration and development. In the "old park," one mining operation (at Slippery Creek) had operated commercially in 1974 and 1975, but in all likelihood it had been abandoned by Septem-



Reclamation of the Slippery Creek mine site focused on the Mineral Mountain mining road and cleanup of abandoned equipment and debris. NPS Photo

ber 1976, when President Ford signed the act into law. Two years later, NPS mining investigators declared the various “old park” claims invalid. By this time—and certainly by the 1980s, when various judges declared the claims null and void—the former mining operators were no longer in a position to conduct reclamation activities. The task of reclamation, therefore, fell to the NPS.

When the Kantishna area became part of Denali National Monument in 1978, most of the existing operators responded by filling out the requisite mining plans of operation and continued mining much as they had before (see above). Each of those plans had a specific reclamation component. NPS staff who investigated these operations, however, often noted that reclamation activities had been undertaken either poorly or not at all. Given the fact that the approval of new mining plans of operation was dependent upon how well existing rules were followed, operators during the early- to mid-1980s paid increasing attention to reclamation.²⁵²

After Judge von der Heydt’s decision and the mining shutdown that followed, NPS staff recognized that the agency had the sole responsibility to clean up the various mining properties under

federal ownership. In 1987, therefore, park resource managers made their first steps in that direction when they did extensive restoration of the mine road and airstrip at Slippery Creek; they also removed a number of abandoned barrels at the former limestone claims along the West Fork of Windy Creek. That same year, park staff also completed Kantishna Hills studies related to revegetation, vegetation mapping, and sensitive plants.²⁵³ More large-scale reclamation work began in 1989 with the first year of the Glen Creek Riparian Ecosystem Recovery Study, a multi-year effort involving the reclamation, regrading, reseeding, and aquatic monitoring of a creek that had been subjected to years of excavation activities.²⁵⁴

During the same period in which the first reclamation activities were taking place, the agency was writing the so-called “mining EIS” which evaluated the cumulative effects of mining at three Alaska NPS units (see above). The draft EIS, dated February 1989, offered several alternatives. But “under each alternative,” it noted, “the National Park Service would pursue a program for reclamation of unreclaimed, abandoned, and acquired mined lands owned in fee by the United States and located within the unit’s boundaries.” The final EIS, released in April

1990, also recommended the implementation of a reclamation program.²⁵⁵ The record of decision, signed in August 1990, provided specifics about the program:

Subject to the availability of funds, the NPS will pursue a reclamation program on disturbed mineral properties acquired by the United States, as well as on unreclaimed, abandoned, void, donated mining claims. Reclamation activities undertaken by the NPS will be guided by the same standards as applied to mining plans of operations. Reclamation site plans and environmental clearance documentation will be prepared prior to initiation of these activities. Where appropriate, the NPS will consider using any authority it may have to require the responsible party to do or assist with the necessary reclamation.²⁵⁶

As noted above, the district court lifted its 5½-year-old mining injunction in January 1991, and in April 1992 an appeals court opinion reaffirmed the district court's action. During this period, personnel in the regional office's Resource Assessment Branch wrote a draft reclamation plan for the area. And as the first applied element in that plan, the branch organized the Kantishna Debris Removal Project during the summer of 1993, which removed debris from seven former mining sites. That same summer, the branch organized a cleanup of drums, batteries, and hazardous fluids from those sites.²⁵⁷

Little reclamation work took place at Kantishna during the mid-1990s, but more recently the pace of cleanup has increased. In 1997, the NPS began a multi-year reclamation project on Slate Creek, and a year later, preliminary work began on Eureka Creek.²⁵⁸ In 2001, agency personnel completed a new cleanup plan. In 2002 and 2006, portions of Caribou Creek were restored, and from 2003 to 2005, park staff cleaned up portions of Glen Creek that had not been reclaimed prior to 1992. Years of work remain, however; as noted in a 2003 report, there were still approximately 1,500 acres of barren gravel tailings in riparian zones from placer and gold mines that had yet to be reclaimed.²⁵⁹

The Spruce 4 Controversy

Almost ten miles east of the Kantishna townsite, Spruce Creek is a five-mile-long tributary of upper Moose Creek. The creek witnessed historical (pre-World War II) activity, as evidenced by the ruins of a historic cabin. By the time the drainage was absorbed into Denali National Park, Northwest Explorations, Inc. owned eight unpatented mining claims (Spruce #1-#8), some of which were actively mined with bulldozers and front-end loaders. By 1981, the patenting process was well underway for two of those claims (Spruce #4 and Spruce #5), and by 1986 both claims had been patented.²⁶⁰

As noted above, the NPS in 1990 went on record as backing a policy of acquiring all patented and valid unpatented mining claims. The agency's front country development concept plan, implemented in February 1997, reiterated that



The bulldozer that was brought to Slippery Creek by the mine operators in 1969 was used during reclamation of the mine road on Mineral Mountain in 1987. The Slippery Creek cabin can be seen at the base of the mountain. Brad Ebel Collection



The Glen Creek drainage, first prospected during the 1905-06 gold rush, had mining activity on it until 1985. The photographer, Stephen Foster, described the scene in the above photo as "ground sluicing on Glen Creek" in 1919. Stephen Foster Collection, 69-92-596, University of Alaska Fairbanks Archive

policy, and during the early to mid-1990s the NPS purchased hundreds of acres of Kantishna Hills mining claims. The intent of that policy was to minimize mining-related environmental degradation and to limit Kantishna-area tourism development to existing facilities.

In June 1997, a private land transaction took place that had the potential to undermine the agency's goals. Jeff Barney and Eugene Desjarlais, partners in a Fairbanks hotel-development company, purchased the patented, 20-acre Spruce 4 parcel from Northwest Explorations, Inc. for an estimated \$500,000. Shortly thereafter, Barney announced his intent to construct a resort and cabin facilities on the parcel. And in conjunction with that development, he planned to improve a little-used mining route (one that crossed Moose Creek numerous times) and lengthen a nearby airstrip.²⁶¹

Environmentalists were outraged at the announced plans, for several reasons. First, both the 20-acre Spruce 4 parcel and portions of the planned road were located in de facto wilderness.²⁶² Second, the proposed new tourism development would bring new tourists over a park road which was operating at the maximum limits that had been set forth in the 1986 general management plan. And third, the partners' bid to improve the existing road, while apparently legal according to Section 110(b) of ANILCA, ran contrary to Congressional language which demanded that "the natural and other values

of such lands" would not be threatened by new or improved access roads. Environmentalists, as a result, hoped to stop the project; as Chip Dennerlein of the National Parks and Conservation Association noted, "This parcel should be acquired as part of the park and not be developed. As a first step, we want to see NPS make every attempt to buy the property from the new owner."²⁶³

The Park Service had little control over the owners' activities on their 20-acre parcel. The owners did, however, need the agency's consent to construct the proposed road improvements. Barney submitted a road-access application in January 1998, and two months later, the NPS responded that it would write an environmental impact statement to evaluate that application. The release of a draft EIS, originally promised in October 1998, was repeatedly delayed, and not until August 1999 was the document released to the public.²⁶⁴



A dramatic rise in the price of gold in 1972 led to a resurgence in placer mining throughout the Kantishna District. Glen Creek was intensively worked with mechanized equipment from 1973 to 1983. Shown above are the abandoned tailings piles and disturbed stream channel of lower Glen Creek. Kenneth F. Karle Collection

This 2005 view of lower Glen Creek shows the stream and floodplain restored to a near-natural configuration. Patches of willow and alder were planted on the floodplain. The return to natural conditions is enhanced by these restoration efforts. Kenneth F. Karle Collection



The draft EIS specified five alternatives. The no-action alternative called for the applicants to sell their property to the NPS; an air-access-only alternative envisioned the construction of a new, 2,500-foot airstrip, which would be near the 20-acre parcel and linked to it by a short spur road; and three surface-access alternatives called for roads along either Moose Creek, Skyline Drive, or the North Bench of Moose Creek. The NPS, at the same time, announced that it would hold five public meetings on the plan: four would be in Alaska in August, and a fifth in Washington, DC in mid-September, not long before the October 6 conclusion of the public comment period.²⁶⁵

When the agency released the draft EIS, it stated that it “has not selected a preferred alternative because it has not yet identified one.” The public, however, tilted strongly against new road construction; as planner Bud Rice noted, the NPS received more than 400 comments even before the draft EIS was released, more than 95 percent of which were against the various surface-access alternatives.²⁶⁶

Toward the end of the comment period, park superintendent Steve Martin flew to Washington, D.C., where he was scheduled to appear before the House and Senate appropriations committees, the latter headed by Sen. Ted Stevens. But that move, which was intended to explore the idea of providing sufficient funds to buy the Spruce 4 parcel, was chastised by the other two members of the Alaska Congressional delegation.

Both Don Young and Frank Murkowski, respectively, headed the House and Senate Energy and Natural Resources committees, and both were in favor of allowing the partners to construct the proposed, 30-cabin McKinley View Lodge.²⁶⁷

During the fall of 1999, the agency proceeded to prepare the final EIS on Spruce Creek access. The document was originally scheduled to be completed by November, but in March 2000 the NPS asked for a delay (until late May) due to “extensive agency and public comment on the draft EIS and the need to conduct an economic feasibility study of the access alternatives.” Soon afterward, Superintendent Martin returned to Washington for further negotiations, and in meetings with Jeff Barney and Sen. Murkowski, they worked out a mutually-agreeable purchase price, which was reportedly “about twice the appraised value.”²⁶⁸ Given that turn of events, the applicants requested that the NPS not release the final EIS while they considered the NPS’s offer to purchase the property. A month later the agency did complete its final EIS (which recommended that the owners “sell all or most of the property to the NPS”). But given the applicants’ request, the final EIS remained as an internal review draft and was not published or distributed.²⁶⁹

Senator Murkowski, one of the members of the three-man team that had worked out the agreement during the spring of 2000, recognized that Congress retained the right to review all government purchases that were above the appraised

value. And because either he or the partners had second thoughts about that agreement, Murkowski opted to prevent the NPS from going ahead with the purchase.²⁷⁰ The senator held up any further actions on the matter for more than 18 months. But in early December 2001, Congress finally authorized the NPS to purchase the property. Early the following February, agency officials reported that “purchase of the 20-acre Spruce #4 patented claim will soon close,” and by the end of the month the transaction was complete.²⁷¹ It called for the partners to sell 18 of the 20 acres to the federal government; the remainder allowed both Barney and Desjarlais to retain one-acre parcels for the cabins that they had recently constructed, with the caveat that they would be only for their “private, personal use.”²⁷²

During the negotiations that led to the land sale, the partners “requested access over existing mining access trails and use of the existing Glen Creek airstrip.” NPS officials recognized that what was being requested was largely a continuation of existing use patterns; the results of that request, therefore, did not constitute an action with potentially significant impacts. As a result, the agency announced that it was terminating its EIS; instead, it planned to issue an environmental assessment. The agency therefore issued an environmental assessment related to the Spruce Creek access question in April 2002. Given the agreement between the partners and NPS, the NPS’s proposed alternative called for an access route that was largely similar to what the partners had proposed in early 1998; it was identical, in fact, except that two-thirds of a mile of new road would be built near Spruce Creek in order to avoid in-stream travel. The partners would be allowed to use the existing Glen Creek airstrip. Use of the 9.7-mile Moose Creek-Spruce Creek route would be allowed as well; the number of these trips, however, “would be limited to protect fish habitat and recreational uses in the area.”²⁷³ The release of the document, announced May 15, started a 30-day public comment period, after which the agency implemented the document’s recommendations.²⁷⁴

Notes - Chapter 14

- ¹ Tom Walker, *Kantishna: Musers, Miners, Mountaineers* (Missoula, Pictorial Histories, 2005), 9, 11.
- ² *Ibid.*, 27-32; Jane G. Haigh, *Searching for Fannie Quigley: A Wilderness Life in the Shadow of Mount McKinley* (Athens, Ohio, Swallow Press, 2007), 53-55, 58.
- ³ Walker, *Kantishna*, 49-50, 55-58; Brown, *Denali: Symbol of the Alaskan Wild*, 81; Sheldon, *The Wilderness of Denali* (New York, Charles Scribner's, 1930), 6-8, 87-90.
- ⁴ Brown, *Denali*, 86; Haigh, *Searching for Fannie Quigley*, 61-62, 72-75; Walker, *Kantishna*, 86-87. Sheldon—and many others as well—spoke of "Fannie Quigley" in 1907 if not earlier, but Joe and Fannie did not marry until February 2, 1918.
- ⁵ Walker, *Kantishna*, 83, 86, 94, 99-100, 102-03; Brown, *Denali*, 68, 74.
- ⁶ Charles Caldwell Hawley, *Wesley Earl Dunkle: Alaska's Flying Miner* (Boulder, University Press of Colorado, 2003), 146; Stephen R. Capps, "Geology and Mineral Resources of the Region Traversed by the Alaska Railroad," in *Mineral Resources of Alaska: Report on Progress of Investigations in 1922*, USGS Bulletin 755 (Washington, GPO, 1924), 144; Stephen R. Capps, *The Kantishna Region, Alaska*, USGS Bulletin 687 (Washington, GPO, 1919), 113.
- ⁷ Gail E. H. Evans, *From Myth to Reality: Travel Experiences and Landscape Perceptions in the Shadow of Mount McKinley, Alaska, 1876-1938*, unpublished M.A. Thesis, U.C. Santa Barbara, February 1987, 76-77.
- ⁸ Sheldon to Mather, December 15, 1915, in John M. Kauffmann, *Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska; A History of its Establishment and Revision of its Boundaries* (Washington, D.C., NPS, July 1954), 7-8.
- ⁹ 64th Congress, 1st Session; H.R. 14775 (April 18, 1916) and S. 5716 (April 22, 1916); Kauffmann, *Mount McKinley National Park*, 8-10.
- ¹⁰ *Congressional Record* 64 (February 19, 1917), 3628, 3630; 64th Congress, Public Law 353 (February 26, 1917); Brown, *Denali*, 91-92.
- ¹¹ Lary M. Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: the Critical Documents* (Lanham, Md., Rowman and Littlefield, 1994), 9, 28-29, 36; Richard Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks; a History* (New Haven, Yale, 1997), 25; Theodore Catton, *Wonderland: An Administrative History of Mount Rainier National Park* (Seattle, NPS, May 1996), 698-99, 701.
- ¹² Frank Norris, *Alaska Subsistence; a National Park Service Management History* (Anchorage, NPS, 2002), 18; NPS, "The Pioneer Yosemite History Center" (pamphlet), at <http://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/upload/pyhc.pdf>
- ¹³ Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System*, 46, 50.
- ¹⁴ Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System*, 28; 51st Congress, Chapter 1263 (California Forest Reservation Act, October 1, 1890, sections 2 and 3 (*U.S. Statutes at Large* 26 [1890], 650); Lary Dilsaver and William C. Tweed, *Challenge of the Big Trees: A Resource History of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* (Three Rivers, Calif., Sequoia Natural History Association, 1990), chapter 4; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 10.
- ¹⁵ Catton, *Wonderland*, 143-54, 207-08, 699-700; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 23.
- ¹⁶ Harlan D. Unrau and Stephen R. Mark, *Crater Lake: Administrative History* (Seattle, NPS, 1991), Chapter 4; 71st Congress, Public Law 574, January 26, 1931 (*U.S. Statutes at Large* 46 [1931], 1043).
- ¹⁷ Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System*, 46, 48; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 60.
- ¹⁸ NPS, "Parkland Protection Hailed as Park Mining Laws Repealed" (News Release), October 8, 1976, in "K3415 Press Releases – Department, 1976-77" folder, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives; D. E. Lee to [Joseph E.] Taylor, November 14, 1939, in File 609-01 (Mining Claims), MOMC, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB; Public Law No. 574, 1043; U.S. Dept. of the Interior, *Environmental Consequences of Mineral Extraction: Glacier Bay National Monument and Mount McKinley National Park and Discussion of Alternatives for Acquisition of Mining Claims and/or Boundary Modifications to Reduce Possible Acquisition Costs, Glacier Bay National Monument, Report to the Congress of the United States Prepared in Partial Compliance with Public Law 94-429*, January 1979, 1; Theodore Catton, *Land Reborn: A History of Administration and Visitor Use in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve* (Anchorage, NPS, 1995), 63-64.
- ¹⁹ Ann Bischoff Kain, *Cultural Resource Management, Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska* (unpublished M.A. thesis, Antioch University, March 2001), 108-11; SMR, August 1921, 2; July 1924, 5; Walker, *Kantishna*, 107; Brown, *Denali*, 109-10.
- ²⁰ Thomas K. Bundtzen, "A History of Mining in the Kantishna Hills," *Alaska Journal* 8 (Spring 1978), 156. Harry Karstēns, in a January 10, 1922 letter to Arno Cammerer (located in DENA Archives) stated that the "Mount McKinley Mining Co." had a "proposed ditch from McKinley River in the Park to the Kantishna District."
- ²¹ SMR, September 1921, 5; April 1923, 5; Capps, "Geology and Mineral Resources of the Region Traversed by the Alaska Railroad," 143-44; Walker, *Kantishna*, 203.
- ²² SMR, April 1923, 5; September 1923, 2, 5; May 1924, 5; October 1924, 8.
- ²³ SMR, April 1923, 3; September 1923, 5; December 1924, 8; Hawley, *Wesley Earl Dunkle*, 88-90.

- ²⁴ SMR, April 1923, 5; September 1923, 5; December 1924, 8.
- ²⁵ SMR, January 1922, 3, 4; February 1922, 3; December 1922, 3; February 1923, 6.
- ²⁶ SMR, April 1922, 2, 3, 7; February 1923, 6; September 1923, 2.
- ²⁷ SMR, October 1922, 6; January 1926, 3; February 1926, 1, 5.
- ²⁸ SMR, March 1926, 1.
- ²⁹ SMR, January 1926, 3.
- ³⁰ 71st Congress, *U.S. Senate Report 545* (April 21, 1930); *Congressional Record* 72 (May 7, 1930), 8522; 71st Congress, Public Law No. 574; *U.S. Statutes at Large* 46 (1931), p. 1043-44. The term "Surface Use Act" was noted years later; see Herbert Maier to Director NPS, November 22, 1948, in File 609-01 ("Mining Claims"), MOMC, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB.
- ³¹ Kain, *Cultural Resource Management*, 109, 112; Brown, *Denali*, 110; SMR, August 1933, 5.
- ³² SMR, October 1931, 2; August 1933, 2, 4.
- ³³ Jane Bryant email, November 24, 2003; Jane Bryant interview, August 2, 2007; SMR, July 1934, 6; September 1937, 5.
- ³⁴ In October 1939, an official with the Red Top Mining Company (above Eureka Creek), noting that there were "frequent outcroppings of coal along the north side of the park," requested permission "to prospect for coal in the park." But a month later, the NPS's chief attorney (in Washington) stated that because of provisions in the Mineral Leasing Act, enacted on February 25, 1920 (66th Congress, Public Law No. 146, noted in *U.S. Statutes at Large* 41 [1920], 437-38, Secs. 1-2), "coal mining in the park is not permissible under existing federal law." George A. Moskey to Supt. MOMC, November 8, 1939, in File 609-01 (Mining Claims), MOMC, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB. Also see SMR, September 1940, 2.
- ³⁵ Kain, *Cultural Resource Management*, 113; SMR, March 1934, 3; September 1937, 2.
- ³⁶ SMR, September 1933, 4; October 1933, 1; *Anchorage Daily Times*, October 9, 1933, 4; Haigh, *Searching for Fannie Quigley*, 141-42.
- ³⁷ Kain, *Cultural Resource Management*, 113-14; Brown, *Denali*, 110-11; Haigh, *Searching for Fannie Quigley*, 143-45.
- ³⁸ SMR, April 1937, 4; August 1937, 3; Hawley, *Wesley Earl Dunkle*, 88, 125-28, 145-46. A May 24, 1971 report by the NPS's Alaska Group, entitled *Prospecting and Mining at Mount McKinley National Park and Glacier Bay National Monument* (p. 3) noted that "In the 1930s [presumably in 1937] a tractor was driven up the Slippery Creek drainage leaving a trail that can still be located in part." Remnants from the period included a log cabin, an airstrip, a road up to the two adits, and scattered refuse.
- ³⁹ SMR, September 1939, 6.
- ⁴⁰ *Federal Register* 1 (June 27, 1936), 677; *Federal Register* 5 (April 29, 1940), 1654.
- ⁴¹ Been to the Director, May 17, 1940, in Folder 208 (Rules and Regulations), MOMC, Entry 7, RG 79, NARA CP.
- ⁴² *Federal Register* 6 (March 26, 1941), 1631-32.
- ⁴³ Hillory A. Tolson to Supt. MOMC, May 5, 1941; Glenn Carrington to Been, June 1, 1941; D.R. Gustafson to Anthony Dimond, June 1, 1941; Been to Director NPS, June 4, 1941, all in Folder 208 (Rules and Regulations), noted above; SMR, March 1942, 2. The level of fees levied to these operators is not known, but based on similar correspondence from 1950, it was probably \$20 per year or less.
- ⁴⁴ Ann Kain, "Going for the Gold in Kantishna," *Alaska Park Science*, December 2006, 41. Congress waived the assessment requirements in 1943 and did not reinstate them until 1950. Public Law 78-47, noted in *U.S. Statutes at Large* 57 (May 3, 1943), 74; Public Law 81-107, noted in *U.S. Statutes at Large* 63 (June 17, 1949), 200-01; SMR, March 1950, 4.
- ⁴⁵ Kain, *Cultural Resource Management*, 114-15; SMR, June 1942, 2; September 1942, 2; March 1943, 1; July 1943, 1-2; October 1943, 1; May 1944, 1; July 1944, 1.
- ⁴⁶ SMR, March 1941, 4; September 1942, 2; March 1943, 1; July 1943, 1-2; August 1944, 1; September 1945, 1.
- ⁴⁷ *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, September 2, 1941, 8; Haigh, *Searching for Fannie Quigley*, 148-52; SMR, August 1945, 1; Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 49-52. Longtime park employee John Rumohr, who knew Busia over a number of years, pronounced his name BOO-see-a, while Bill Brown (*Denali, Symbol of the Alaskan Wild*, 113) states that boo-SHAY was correct.
- ⁴⁸ Pearson, *My Life of High Adventure*, 53-61; SMR, September 1943, 2; April 1944, 2; August 1944, 3; April 1947, 2; Brown, *Denali*, 113-15; Harry Karstens to Arno Cammerer, January 10, 1922, in DENA Archives.
- ⁴⁹ Rolfe Buzzell, *Overview of Mining in the Kantishna District, 1903-1968*, unpub. mss., January 9, 1989, Logan Hovis (NPS) files, p. 21; Alaska Department of Natural Resources, *Report of the Division of Mines and Minerals for the Year*, various annual issues, 1959 to 1969.
- ⁵⁰ Kain, *Cultural Resource Management*, 115; SMR, 1957, 3. Busia lived in a cabin along Moose Creek and trapped in the area; he was one of the few year-round residents during the postwar period.
- ⁵¹ Kain, *Cultural Resource Management*, 115-16; SMR, May 1950, 3; SMR, August 1966, 4; Territory of Alaska, *Report of the Commissioner of Mines to the Governor*, various biennial issues, 1946 through 1958; Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources, *Report of the Division of Mines and Minerals for the Year*, 1959 to 1969; Buzzell,

Overview of Mining, 18-20. Thomas Bundtzen, in his "A History of Mining in the Kantishna Hills," p. 157, notes that Crooked Creek mining continued until 1965. As noted in Chapter 7, the Glen Creek Development Company built a 1,300-foot airstrip near its workings and also lengthened the Kantishna airstrip to 1,750 feet.⁵² SMR, May 1949, 2; November 1949, 2; May 1950, 3; August 1950, 4; *Anchorage Daily Times*, December 12, 1975, 3; NPS, "New Mining Regulations Adopted by Park Service" (DOI News Release), January 26, 1977, in "K3415 Press Releases – Departmental, 1976-77" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.

⁵³ SMR, July 1954, 4; NPS Alaska Group, *Prospecting and Mining*, 3; Bureau of Land Management, "Grant" Mining Claim File (FF034273), NARA Anchorage. Jane Bryant (June 22, 2007 interview) noted that Herring's "old road" forked south from today's park road one-quarter mile east of Eielson Visitor Center. An Alaska Road Commission vehicle had first used the route in September 1932 to access the Park Service's Copper Mountain relief cabin, which had been built in 1928. See Photo 88-12-219, Edmunds Collection, AMHA.

⁵⁴ SMR, June 1950, 3; Grant Pearson to Supt., Mount Rainier NP, July 11, 1950, in Folder 901 (Permits), MOMC, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB.

⁵⁵ See Supt. MOMC to RD/R4, April 8, 1952, in "Special Use Permits" file, Folder 99, Series 1, DARC, DENA Archives. The cessation of road-use fees, in all probability, was a response to two agency-wide "delegations of authority" orders that shifted authority for fee assessment from the Interior Secretary to the NPS Director (in June 1951) and then to regional and park officials (in May 1952). Park superintendents, beginning in 1940, had complained that levying fees was unnecessary because Kantishna miners, who were few in number, caused few resource-related problems along the park road. It is likely, therefore, that Supt. Pearson took advantage of the flexibility provided by these orders to eliminate the road use fees. *Federal Register* 16 (June 19, 1951), 5847, Sec. 24; *Federal Register* 17 (May 23, 1952), 4721, Sec. 20.

⁵⁶ SMR, October 1947, 3; March 1948, 4; March 1951, 4; September 1953, 1; January 1955, 3; April 1955, 4; February 1956, 2; September 1956, 3.

⁵⁷ SMR, August 1957, 3.

⁵⁸ Although the park's mining regulations were considered "unnecessary" after September 1976, they remained on the books until December 1980. See *Federal Register* 45 (May 22, 1980), 34759; *Federal Register* 45 (November 25, 1980), 78119-20.

⁵⁹ SMR, May 1957, 4; June 1957, 4; *Federal Register* 22 (June 4, 1957), 3896.

⁶⁰ *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, May 12, 1958, 3; Public Land Order 1667, noted in *Federal Register* 23 (June 28, 1958), 4811.

⁶¹ As Donald H. White notes in *Antimony Deposits of the Stampede Creek Area, Kantishna District, Alaska*, USGS Bulletin 936-N (Washington, GPO, 1942), p. 332, "The date of the discovery of the deposit is not known. The first active mining was done in 1915, in response to the very high prices prevailing for antimony at that time. About 150 tons of ore was mined, probably in 1915, but no shipments were made."

⁶² Brown, *Denali*, 192; Pilgrim to Ike P. Taylor, November 27, 1942, in File 610 ("Private Lands"), MOMC, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB; Bundtzen, "A History of Mining in the Kantishna Hills," 159. In early 1937, the ARC provided materials for the construction of three bridges along the Stampede-Lignite route to allow summer ore hauls. The bridges soon caved in, however.

⁶³ Earl Pilgrim to Morris P. Kirk, June 10, 1937, and Kirk to Pilgrim, June 23, 1937, both in Box 6, Folder 15, Box 6, Accession 318 (Earl Pilgrim papers), DENA Archives; G. O. Kempton to Earl Pilgrim, May 12, 1952, in "Stampede Airport" folder, FAA Airports Division historical files, Anchorage; Brown, *A History*, 207; White, *Antimony Deposits of the Stampede Creek Area*, 332-34; Bundtzen, "A History of Mining in the Kantishna Hills," 159.

⁶⁴ Brown, *Denali*, 192.

⁶⁵ Supt. MOMC to Director, December 10, 1942; Newton Drury to RD/R4, January 6, 1943; both in File 610 ("Private Lands"), noted above; SMR, December 1942, 2; Brown, *Denali*, 193.

⁶⁶ Brown, *Denali*, 193; SMR, April 1947, 3; May 1947, 3; January 1948, 2; May 1948, 2; September 1948, 2; William E. Warne to Mr. Sherman, June 18, 1948, in "Special Use Permits" file, Box 99, Series 1, DARC, DENA Archives.

⁶⁷ Brown, *Denali*, 193; SMR, July 1954, 1; SMR, March 1955, 1, 3.

⁶⁸ Territory of Alaska, *Report of the Commissioner of Mines to the Governor*, 1956 issue, pp. 48, 92.

⁶⁹ Brown, *Denali*, 193-94; SMR, April 1958, 2.

⁷⁰ *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, March 24, 1961, 3; May 27, 1961, 3; June 20, 1961, 1; August 19, 1963, 4; Eugene Therriault, "A Road to Stampede," unpub. mss., 8-13, Item 869, DENA RML.

⁷¹ Brown, *Denali*, 194; Bill Brown to author, email, November 21, 2005; Natural Resource Consultants, "Stampede Mine-Alaska, Report of Visit," August 1977, in Logan Hovis, comp., "Stampede Mine and Mill Process Notes," unpub. mss., Hovis files. In 1988, Celia Hunter stated that Pilgrim "used up the entire pioneer access road appropriation for one year" to construct this route (see Chapter 9).

⁷² William E. Wrather (Director, USGS) to O.A. Tomlinson, September 10, 1947, in File 609.01 ("Mining – Part I"), MOMC, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB. According to the *Anchorage Daily News*, November 12, 1948, p. 4, "In 1931,

G. A. Waring of the Geological Survey sampled the limestone outcroppings along the bony ridge near Little Windy Creek, between Cantwell and Windy.”

⁷³ Frank T. Been to RD/R4, in File 609.01 (“Mining – Part I”), MOMC, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*; William E. Wrather (Director, USGS) to O.A. Tomlinson, September 10, 1947, in File 609.01, see above. The study, by Gerald A. Waring, was published as *Nonmetalliferous Deposits in the Alaska Railroad Belt*, Circular 18 (Washington, GPO, 1947), 10 pp.

⁷⁵ Claus-M. Naske, “Alaska in the Mix,” *Alaska History* 16 (Spring-Fall 2001), 17-33.

⁷⁶ Been to RD/R4, August 16, 1948, and Arthur E. Beaudin to J.A. Krug, August 25, 1948; both in File 609.01 (“Mining – Part I”), MOMC, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB; SMR, May 1948, 4; July 1948, 1; August 1948, 1, 3.

⁷⁷ Alfred C. Kuehl to RD/R4, August 14, 1948, and Been to RD/R4, September 7, 1948; both in File 609.01, see above; *Anchorage Daily Times*, September 7, 1948, 1. As noted in *Jessen’s Weekly*, October 29, 1948, p. 2, the Bureau was later authorized to drill “six holes, two inches in diameter and five hundred feet long.”

⁷⁸ Drury to Been, telegram, September 7, 1948, Been to RD/R4, October 14, 1948, Kuehl to RD/R4, October 14, 1948, and Been to RD/R4, October 29, 1948, all in File 609-01, see above; *Anchorage Daily Times*, September 8, 1948, 2; *Anchorage Daily Times*, September 10, 1948, 2. Supt. Been, along with H. H. Hilscher of Fairbanks, felt that there were procedural errors with how the claims were filed, and Been kept other NPS officials apprised of these technicalities. But because the claims were never developed, these purported errors remained unresolved. Naske, “Alaska in the Mix,” 20.

⁷⁹ Krug to Robert Day, September 15, 1948, in File 609-01, see above.

⁸⁰ John C. Reed, etc. to Chairman, Alaska Field Committee, October 8, 1948, and Kuehl to RD/R4, October 14, 1948; both in File 609-01, see above.

⁸¹ Warne to Director NPS, October 18, 1948, in File 208.43 (“Mining”), MOMC, Entry 7, RG 79, NARA CP; Kadow to Warne, November 12, 1948, Herbert Maier to Director NPS, November 22, 1948, and Drury to Secretary Krug, November 26, 1948; all in File 609-01, see above. The Glacier Bay act was Public Law 74-750, which became law on June 22, 1936; see *U.S. Statutes at Large* 49 (1936), p. 1817.

⁸² Been to RD/R4, December 10, 1948; Maier to Director NPS, December 22, 1948; Drury to Secretary Krug, February 7, 1949; all in File 208.43 (“Mining”), see above; *Federal Register* 14 (March 3, 1949), 955-57.

⁸³ As noted in the *Anchorage Daily News*, November 12, 1948, p. 4, plans at this time called for the cement plant to be built in the park just east of the railroad at mile 323. Also see Been to Director NPS, September 7, 1948, and Kuehl to RD/R4, October 14, 1948, both in File 609-01, see above.

⁸⁴ Kuehl to RD/R4, October 14, 1948, in File 609-01, see above.

⁸⁵ Marion Clawson (Director, BLM) to Secretary Krug, December 10, 1948; Public Land Order 538, in *Federal Register* 13 (December 18, 1948), 7866.

⁸⁶ Krug to Robert Day, September 15, 1948, and Tolson to RD/R4, September 22, 1948; both in File 609.01, see above.

⁸⁷ Been to RD/R4, October 29, 1948; Drury to Warne, November 26, 1948; both in File 602 (“Boundaries – General”), MOMC, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB.

⁸⁸ Drury to RD/R4, December 23, 1948; Been to RD/R4, January 12, 1949; Tomlinson to Director NPS, January 25, 1949; Charles Richey to Hillory Tolson, May 18, 1949; all in File 609-01, see above.

⁸⁹ Naske, “Alaska in the Mix,” 21-22.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 23-25, 28; William Warne to Secretary Oscar Chapman, January 19, 1950, in File 609-01, MOMC, Entry 7, RG 79, NARA CP.

⁹² SMR, July 1950, 5, 6; August 1950, 2, 3; September 1950, 5; October 1950, 3.

⁹³ John E. Doerr to Director NPS, November 9, 1948, in File 609-01, MOMC, Entry 7, RG 79, NARA CP. The year’s findings were published in an open-file report by Robert M. Moxham, Walter S. West, and Arthur E. Nelson entitled *Cement Raw Materials Available to the Windy Creek Area, Alaska* (USGS, 1951). Much of this data was later incorporated into Robert M. Moxham, Richard A. Eckhart, and Edward H. Cobb, *Geology and Cement Raw Materials of the Windy Creek Area, Alaska* (USGS Bulletin 1039-D), 1959.

⁹⁴ Acting Director, BLM to Files, November 9, 1950; Thomas B. Nolan and Newton B. Drury to Director, Bureau of Land Management, November 29, 1950; both in File 609-01, MOMC, Entry 7, RG 79, NARA CP; Public Land Order 697, in *Federal Register* 16 (February 8, 1951), 1184, 1203.

⁹⁵ Naske notes, perhaps with tongue in cheek (“Alaska in the Mix,” p. 17) that “the story of the United States effort to make concrete in Alaska proves once again that on the Last Frontier federal economic development programs never die, they just require more funding.”

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 28-31.

⁹⁷ SMR, July 1956, 1, 3; Duane D. Jacobs to Mark B. Ringstad, November 20, 1958, in File L3023 (“Land Use – Mining, 1953-60”), in Box 9, Accession 9NNS 79 90 005, NARA SB. NPS regulations, in place since March 1947 (see Chapter 13), limited aircraft landings in the park to the McKinley Park airstrip and the surface of Wonder Lake.

- ⁹⁸ This act was Public Law 84-830, noted in *U.S. Statutes at Large* 70 (1956), pp. 709-14.
- ⁹⁹ Jacobs to Ringstad, November 20, 1958; Charles E. Tulin to Jacobs, December 6, 1958; Jacobs to Tulin, December 17, 1958; all in File L3023, Box 9, see above; SMR, September 1959, 5; Public Law 84-830, Sec. 202(a) and Sec. 202(b); Public Land Order 1646, in *Federal Register* 23 (June 4, 1958), 3853; "Alaska Limestone Corporation (1948-1986)" folder, in Box 35, Denali Administrative Records Collection (DARC), DENA Archives. Why the Alaska Limestone Corporation attorney, in his December 6, 1958 letter, referred to "restaked" claims is borne out by an April 1, 1979 *Anchorage Daily Times* article (p. F-1) stating that "in 1957, [the firm] filed 14 claims on the west bank of Windy Creek about 14 miles southwest of Cantwell."
- ¹⁰⁰ Samuel A. King to RD/R4, April 21, 1960; King to RD/R4, October 20, 1960; both in File L3023, see above.
- ¹⁰¹ King to RD/R4, June 23, 1960; Tulin to King, July 1, 1960; Singer to RD/R4, July 5, 1960; King to RD/R4, July 6, 1960; John B. Wosky to Supt. MOMC, July 11, 1960; all in File L3023, see above.
- ¹⁰² *Anchorage Daily Times*, October 11, 1960, 1; Samuel A. King to RD/R4, October 20, 1960; King to RD/R4, November 10, 1960; Rita Singer to RD/R4, November 23, 1960; all in File L3023, see above.
- ¹⁰³ *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, July 31, 1963, 1; SMR, August 1963, 2; SMR, September 1963, 5; *Anchorage Daily Times*, October 5, 1963, 2; *Anchorage Daily Times*, October 18, 1963, 1.
- ¹⁰⁴ Henry Roloff to Anthony Wayne Smith, August 30, 1963; Smith to Alaska Department of Economic Development and Planning, August 19, 1963; both in File 882 (1959-66), Series 41, RG 01, Alaska State Archives.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, issues of November 14, 1963, 4; December 27, 1963, 4; and June 25, 1964, 1. Also see SMR, January 1964, 3; SMR, June 1964, 5; SMR, July 1964, 7; SMR, August 1964, 5.
- ¹⁰⁶ NPS, Alaska Group, *Prospecting and Mining*, 3; Steve Buskirk to Chief Ranger, MOMC, July 11, 1975, in Catalog 9169, DENA Archives.
- ¹⁰⁷ Pearson to RD/R4, August 4, 1952, in File 609.01 ("Mining Claims"), MOMC, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB.
- ¹⁰⁸ Pearson to RD/R4, August 4, 1952; Lawrence C. Merriam to Director NPS, telegram, August 14, 1952; George L. Collins to Pearson, August 15, 1952; Pearson to RD/R4, August 15, 1952; all in File 609.01, see above.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Federal Register* 17 (May 28, 1952), 4831, 4833; *Federal Register* 17 (August 13, 1952), 7368-69; Wirth to RD/R4, telegram, August 18, 1952, in File 616 ("McKinley Land Withdrawals"), MOMC, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB.
- ¹¹⁰ Lawrence C. Merriam to Manager, Fairbanks Land Office, BLM, August 20, 1952, in File 616 ("Land Withdrawals and Restorations"), MOMC, CCF, RG 79, NARA SB. Merriam, in his letter to the BLM, made no mention of the mining threat; instead, he stated that it was "essential that said lands be reserved for [NPS] development. ... [T]he area described above is the minimum required for the proper development of this important administrative site and public use area near the main entrance to the park."
- ¹¹¹ Frank T. Hirst to RD/R4, September 10, 1952, in File 609.01, noted above. By September 12, the "hearsay" had been proven true; see Hirst to RD/R4, September 12, same file.
- ¹¹² B. F. Manbey to Great Northern Stone Corporation, September 11, 1952, in File 609.01, noted above.
- ¹¹³ As Acting Superintendent Frank Hirst noted, "The road now exists. While it is not a road in the literal sense, but is merely the removal of brush to allow passage of a truck, it is still regrettable." Hirst to RD/R4, September 12, 1952; B. F. Manbey to Supt. MOMC, September 11, 1952; Manbey to Supt. MOMC, telegram, September 11, 1952; all in File 609.01, see above.
- ¹¹⁴ Frank T. Hirst to RD/R4, September 12, 1952; Lawrence C. Merriam to Manager, Fairbanks Land Office, September 16, 1952; Merriam to Director NPS, September 16, 1952; all in File 616, noted above. Again, as a month earlier, agency officials told the BLM that the withdrawal was needed "for administrative and public use development and for the protection of the scenic highway" (which, indeed, was true) in order to conform to language in regulations that had been implemented on May 28, 1952 and August 13, 1952 (see above).
- ¹¹⁵ Hirst to RD/R4, October 6, 1952; Lawrence C. Merriam to Director NPS, October 14, 1952; E. L. Arnell to Grant Pearson, April 3, 1953; all in File 609.01, see above.
- ¹¹⁶ Conrad Wirth to RD/R4, April 1, 1953, in File L2423 ("Encroachments-Mining") in Box 9, Accession 9NNS 79 90 005, NARA SB.
- ¹¹⁷ Grant Pearson to RD/R4, February 16, 1953; Herbert Maier to Director NPS, February 19, 1953; Pearson to RD/R4, April 6, 1953; all in File 616, noted above.
- ¹¹⁸ Herbert Maier to Supt. MOMC, April 22, 1953, in File 609.01, see above; Maier to Director NPS, February 19, 1953, in File 616, see above; Wirth to RD/R4, April 1, 1953, in File L2423, see above.
- ¹¹⁹ SMR, July 1953, 3; SMR, July 1954, 4; SMR, June 1955, 5; "Great Northern Stone Corporation (1935-1957)" folder, Box 35, DARC, DENA Archives.
- ¹²⁰ SMR, June 1955, 5; SMR, April 1957, 4; "Great Northern Stone Corporation" folder, Box 35, see above.
- ¹²¹ SMR, May 1957, 4; June 1957, 4; *Federal Register* 22 (June 4, 1957), 3896.
- ¹²² *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, May 12, 1958, 3; Public Land Order 1667, noted in *Federal Register* 23 (June 28, 1958), 4811.

- ¹²³ NPS, Alaska Group, *Prospecting and Mining*, 12, NPS TIC Report 184/D-255; Samuel A. King to RD/R4, November 29, 1961, in "Public Lands: Withdrawals and Restorations, 1949-1966" file, Box 32, DARC.
- ¹²⁴ Celia Hunter to Robert Weeden, n.d. (Spring 1970?); Hunter to Weeden, Stewart Brandborg, and Ed Wayburn, n.d. (Spring 1970?); both in Box 17, Northern Alaska Environmental Center Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Archives, UAF; James H. Anderson to Sen. Ted Stevens, March 6, 1971, in File NR 1-2 (1971), Series 88, RG 01, ASA; NPS, Alaska Group, *Prospecting and Mining*, 2, 12-13. Taylor, in March 1970, was cited for destruction of natural features related to his crew's tree cutting; a year later, he pled guilty to the charge and was given a six-month suspended sentence. That August, he was also cited for following an unauthorized vehicle route during his 1970 trip to the mine; that charge, however, was later dropped. See "McKinley Mercury Mining, Inc. (1965-1987)" folder, Box 36, DARC, DENA Archives.
- ¹²⁵ NPS, Alaska Group, *Prospecting and Mining*, 1-2, 9-10, 12.
- ¹²⁶ Public Land Law Review Commission, *One Third of the Nation's Land: A Report to the President and to the Congress* (Washington, GPO, 1970), 205.
- ¹²⁷ Gordon Wright to Rep. Nick Begich, May 18, 1971; Wright to Sen. Mike Gravel, May 18, 1971; both in File NR 1-2 (1971), Series 88, RG 01, ASA; Stanley T. Albright to Deborah Vogt, November 22, 1972, in Box 17, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, Inc. Collection, UAF.
- ¹²⁸ Frank Williss, "Do Things Right the First Time:" *The National Park Service and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980*, revised edition (Anchorage, NPS, 2005), 51-52; Alaska Planning Group, *Master Plan, Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska, with Proposed Additions* (Washington?, NPS, December 1973), 48; APG, *Final Environmental Statement, Proposed Mt. McKinley National Park Additions, Alaska* (Washington?, NPS, October 1974), 5, 129-30; Director, NPS to Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, May 14, 1975, in "Miscellaneous" File, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.
- ¹²⁹ S. 2273 in *Congressional Record* 119 (July 27, 1973), 26358; H.R. 9733 in *Congressional Record* 119 (July 31, 1973), 27072.
- ¹³⁰ Donald W. Carson and James W. Johnson, *Mo: the Life and Times of Morris K. Udall* (Tucson, Univ. of Arizona Press, 2001), 184-85; S. 425, in *Congressional Record* 120 (December 20, 1974), 41996-97; H.R. 25, in *Congressional Record* 121 (May 20, 1975 and June 10, 1975), 15421, 18008.
- ¹³¹ *Anchorage Daily Times*, October 6, 1975, 2; *Anchorage Daily News*, October 7, 1975, 1; *Anchorage Daily Times*, December 12, 1975, 3; Steve Buskirk field report in "McKinley Mercury Mining, Inc. (1965-1987)" folder, in Box 36, DARC, DENA Archives. Joe Van Horn, in an October 15, 2007 email, notes that the mine was also active in 1976, according to work affidavits in the park's resources files.
- ¹³² H.R. 9540, in *Congressional Record* 121 (September 10, 1975), 28335; S. 2371, in *Congressional Record* 121 (September 18, 1975), 29200-01; *Anchorage Daily Times*, October 20, 1975, 15. In addition to Death Valley, Glacier Bay, and Mount McKinley, the bill also called for the phaseout of new mining in Crater Lake National Park, Organ Pipe National Monument, and Coronado National Memorial. As noted earlier in this chapter, Olympic and Grand Canyon national parks had once sanctioned mining as well. The Olympic park bill, however, called for a five-year phaseout of all new mineral locations in that portion of the park where it was sanctioned. By 1969, active mining had stopped at both Grand Canyon and Olympic. Public Law 75-778 (Olympic National Park Act), in *United States Statutes at Large* 52 (June 29, 1938), 1241; Michael F. Anderson, *Polishing the Jewel: An Administrative History of Grand Canyon National Park* (Grand Canyon Association, Monograph #11, 2000), 40.
- ¹³³ *Anchorage Daily Times*, October 6, 1975, 2; *Anchorage Daily Times*, October 7, 1975, 1; *Anchorage Daily Times*, December 12, 1975, 3. As noted in an NPS press release ("New Mining Regulations Adopted by Park Service," January 26, 1977, in "K3415 Press Releases – Departmental, 1976-77" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives), the Mount McKinley antimony mine was one of just four that had been active within NPS units since 1973.
- ¹³⁴ *Anchorage Daily News*, October 8, 1975, 2; *Anchorage Daily Times*, October 8, 1975, 23; Stevens to Sandy Kogl, Denali Citizens Council, November 24, 1975, in "K4223 Publications – DCC Newsletter" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives; *Anchorage Daily Times*, December 12, 1975, 1; *Congressional Record* 121 (September 18, 1975), 29200-01; *Congressional Record* 122 (February 4, 1976), 2264.
- ¹³⁵ *Anchorage Daily Times*, issues of February 25, 1976, 20; April 2, 1976, 19; June 2, 1976, 1; and September 3, 1976, 8; NPS, "Parkland Protection Hailed as Park Mining Laws Repealed" (press release), October 8, 1976, in "K3415 Press Releases – Departmental, 1976-77" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.
- ¹³⁶ Sections 3, 4, and 6 of Public Law 94-429, as noted in *United States Statutes at Large* 90 (September 28, 1976), 1342-45.
- ¹³⁷ Section 8 of Public Law 94-429. As called for in this section, the NPS issued a public notice of the one-year requirement in the October 20, 1976 *Federal Register*, page 46357.
- ¹³⁸ S. 2371 Summary, September 14, 1976, in <http://thomas.loc.gov>; NPS, "Parkland Protection Hailed," see above; Public Law 94-429.
- ¹³⁹ *Federal Register* 41 (November 11, 1976), 49862-66; *Federal Register* 42 (January 26, 1977), 4835-41.

- ¹⁴⁰ NPS, "New Mining Regulations," see above.
- ¹⁴¹ *Anchorage Daily Times*, January 12, 1977, 42.
- ¹⁴² USDI, *Environmental Consequences of Mineral Extraction: Glacier Bay National Monument and Mount McKinley National Park and Discussion of Alternatives for Acquisition of Mining Claims and/or Boundary Modification to Reduce Possible Acquisition Costs, Glacier Bay National Monument*, Report to the Congress of the United States Prepared in Partial Compliance with Public Law 94-429, January 1979, 113.
- ¹⁴³ USDI, *Environmental Consequences of Mineral Extraction*, 2, 113; BLM, "Complaint (Contest of Mining Claims)," April 16, 1979, in "McKinley Mercury Mining, Inc. (1965-1987)" folder, Box 36, DARC, DENA Archives.
- ¹⁴⁴ USDI, *Environmental Consequences of Mineral Extraction*, 113.
- ¹⁴⁵ NPS, *Environmental Overview and Analysis of Mining Effects*, DENA (Denver, the author, September 1981), 164.
- ¹⁴⁶ "McKinley Mercury Mining, Inc. (1965-1987)" folder, Box 36, DARC, DENA Archives.
- ¹⁴⁷ Barry Donnellan to Daniel Kuehn, September 25, 1977, in "Grant" mining claim file (AKFF 034273), NARA ANC; various documents in *USA v. Harold Hering, Norman R. Hering, and Robert Gish*, in Hering Contest Record (AKFF 047031), NARA SP, courtesy of BLM Anchorage; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, March 11, 1980, 6.
- ¹⁴⁸ *Anchorage Daily Times*, April 1, 1979, F-1; *Anchorage Daily Times*, May 9, 1980, A-1; NPS, *Environmental Overview and Analysis*, DENA, 164; "Alaska Limestone Corporation (1948-1987)" folder, in Box 35, DARC, DENA Archives.
- ¹⁴⁹ Alaska Planning Group, *Master Plan, Mount McKinley National Park* (December 1973), 48; APG, *Final Environmental Statement, Proposed Mt. McKinley National Park Additions* (October 1974), 5, 130. The APG, in its December 1973 draft EISs, recommended that all of the proposed Alaska parklands except one (Yukon-Charley National Rivers) not be opened to new mineral locations and development. Williss, "Do Things Right the First Time," 68.
- ¹⁵⁰ Joint Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission for Alaska, *Land Planning and Policy in Alaska; Volume I, National Interest Lands, Part I* (Anchorage, the Commission, July 1973), III-13-1 to III-13-4; Williss, "Do Things Right the First Time," 60, 87; H.B. 489, in *Alaska House Bill History*, 1975, 227.
- ¹⁵¹ Williss, "Do Things Right the First Time," 88-89; Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Public Law 96-487, *Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, Legislative History*, Fall 1981; vol. I, pp. 22-23, and vol. III, pp. 11-12 and 36-37. Stevens's bill called for approximately 12 million acres of new national parklands and 56 million acres in cooperative lands; at Mount McKinley, the bill called for 1,130,000 acres of parkland and 1,960,000 acres of cooperative lands.
- ¹⁵² Williss, "Do Things Right the First Time," 93, 97; Cecil D. Andrus's statement in U.S. House of Representatives, "Hearings Before the Subcommittee on General Oversight and Alaska Lands," Serial No. 95-16, Part XVI, September 15, 1977 (Washington, GPO, 1977), 110-15.
- ¹⁵³ ADF&G, *Public Law 96-487, ANILCA Legislative History*; vol. II, pp. 201 and 206-08.
- ¹⁵⁴ Williss, "Do Things Right the First Time," 97-100; ADF&G, *Public Law 96-487, ANILCA Legislative History*; vol. XXXIII, pp. 565-66, 608, 701, and 804-05, 937-38. Sen. Stevens, who had advocated that the Kantishna area be considered as a national recreation area (NRA) rather than part of the park addition, made a statement just after the committee report was issued. He noted that "including the Kantishna area in the expanded Park was a particularly significant error. This historic mining district which still supports a year round community and active gold mines should not be added to the Park. The inholding problems will be enormous and Park designation could spell the end of a way of life for the people of the area. Fortunately, there is a chance for correcting this problem when the special study authorized for this area is completed. However, interim designation as an NRA would make considerably more sense."
- ¹⁵⁵ ADF&G, *Public Law 96-487, ANILCA Legislative History*; vol. III, pp. 808-11; vol. VII, pp. 157-61, 466-67, 469, 608-10.
- ¹⁵⁶ Williss, "Do Things Right the First Time," 107-12.
- ¹⁵⁷ *Public Law 96-487*, as noted in *U.S. Statutes at Large* 94 (1980), pp. 2384, 2456-57, and 2465.
- ¹⁵⁸ *Public Law 96-487*, as noted in *U.S. Statutes at Large* 94 (1980), p. 2383.
- ¹⁵⁹ Proclamation 4616, December 1, 1978, in *Federal Register* 43 (December 5, 1978), 57035-41.
- ¹⁶⁰ *Public Law 94-579* (October 21, 1976), Sec. 314, in *U.S. Statutes at Large* 90 (1976), 2769-70.
- ¹⁶¹ *Federal Register* 44 (April 5, 1978), 20426-27.
- ¹⁶² NPS, *Environmental Overview and Analysis of Mining, Kantishna Hills, Denali National Monument, Alaska* (Denver, the author, September 1980), 8; Russell Chadwick, *Gross Mineral Appraisal of MOMC, KATM, and Proposed LACL*, September 30, 1975, 11, in BLM File FF-047031.
- ¹⁶³ *Anchorage Daily News*, July 12, 1983, A-22; NPS, *Environmental Overview and Analysis of Mining Effects*, DENA (September 1981), 73, 80, 163.
- ¹⁶⁴ *Federal Register* 44 (February 27, 1979), 11068-69.

- ¹⁶⁵ NPS, *Environmental Overview and Analysis, Kantishna Hills*, 2; *Federal Register* 44 (February 27, 1979), 11068. Also see Douglas Warnock to Sam Koppenberg, May 1, 1981, in "Moose/Taybo" folder, and materials in various mining plans of operation folders (1979-1982), Boxes 34 and 35, DARC, DENA Archives. Notices for 16 mining plans of operation are shown in volume 44 (1979) of the *Federal Register*: June 8, pp. 33162-63; July 2, p. 38681; September 20, p. 54558, and October 15, p. 59297.
- ¹⁶⁶ Larry A. May (Chief, Environmental Investigations Unit, DSC) to Manager, Denver Service Center, "Report on Mining and Mineral-Related Activity...", December 5, 1979, in Box 33, DARC, DENA Archives; Alex Carter interview, September 5, 2007.
- ¹⁶⁷ Whalen to Sen. Ted Stevens, April 20, 1979, in "Public Lands: Lands Acquisition (1950-1990)" file Box 32, DARC, DENA Archives.
- ¹⁶⁸ NPS, *Environmental Overview and Analysis, Kantishna Hills*, 1, 3-4; SAR, 1980, 4.
- ¹⁶⁹ NPS, *Environmental Overview and Analysis, Kantishna Hills*, 13, 16, 106-14. Ironically, NPS's September 1981 report (*Environmental Overview and Analysis of Mining Effects, DENA*, p. 11) stated that during the 1980 season there had been 12 active placer operations on 62 claims, plus 4 active lode operations on 10 claims.
- ¹⁷⁰ NPS, *Environmental Overview and Analysis, Kantishna Hills*, 16-47.
- ¹⁷¹ The Alaska Land Use Council, established by Section 1201 of ANILCA, was composed of federal, state, and Native representatives; its purpose was to conduct studies, advise the Interior Secretary, and make recommendations in a variety of policy areas. The Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine study was the only specific study noted in ANILCA.
- ¹⁷² NPS, *Environmental Overview and Analysis of Mining Effects, DENA* (Denver, the author, September 1981), 9, 162-63.
- ¹⁷³ Williss, "Do Things Right the First Time," 148.
- ¹⁷⁴ NPS, *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study Report, DENA* (Anchorage, the author, December 1984), 12-13.
- ¹⁷⁵ NPS, *Environmental Overview and Analysis, DENA*, 9. The U.S. Senate, in a November 1979 committee report (*Report 96-413*, pp. 167-68) stated that the eight lode claims located on the ridge between the Tokositna and Kanikula glaciers were "all located on the very edge of the boundary and are part of watershed that flow outside of the park." Senators, apparently aware that the claim had a small airstrip that could serve as a base of operation for guided hunting parties, recommended in their report that the NPS examine the desirability of making a minor boundary adjustment to exclude those lands from the park. No evidence suggests that these claims were economically viable for their mineral potential.
- ¹⁷⁶ NPS, *Environmental Overview and Analysis, DENA*, 161. Details of the adjudication of 30 Kantishna Hills placer claims were laid out on pp. 138-51 of that document.
- ¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 162-63, plus NPS maps 20008 and 20009, both dated August 1981.
- ¹⁷⁸ According to the *Anchorage Daily News*, July 12, 1983, there were "15 to 20 active placer mines in the Kantishna Hills area."
- ¹⁷⁹ NPS, *Environmental Overview and Analysis, DENA*, 1, 73, 162-63. As noted above, no commercial mining had taken place in the southern portion of the New Park since 1954.
- ¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 14-87.
- ¹⁸¹ Scott Meyer and Ross Kavanagh, "Fish Resources and the Effects of Mining Activities in the Kantishna Hills, Denali National Park, 1982," June 1983; Kenneth Kertel, "Wildlife and the Effects of Mining in the Kantishna Hills, DENA," NPS Research/Resources Management Report AR-2, 1984.
- ¹⁸² *Anchorage Daily Times*, November 22, 1982, C-2; December 18, 1982, B-5; May 28, 1983, B-9; *Anchorage Daily News*, May 28, 1983, B-5; Salisbury and Dietz, Inc., "1983 Mineral Resource Studies in the Kantishna Hills and Dunkle Mine Areas, DENA" (three volumes), April 1984.
- ¹⁸³ *Federal Register* 48 (March 1, 1983), 8599-8600; NPS, *Denali National Park and Preserve, Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study, Alaska* (Anchorage, the author, May 1983), *passim*.
- ¹⁸⁴ *Anchorage Daily Times*, July 7, 1983, C-4; July 11, 1983, B-5; July 12, 1983, B-1; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 12, 1983, A-22; NPS, *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study Report* (December 1984), 285-92; Alaska Land Use Council, *Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study Report* (May 1984), 13.
- ¹⁸⁵ Alaska Land Use Council, *Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study Report*, 11, 17-18; NPS, *Final EIS, Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine* (December 1984), 585.
- ¹⁸⁶ Alaska Land Use Council, *Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study Report*, 11-13, 15-17; NPS, *Final EIS, Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine* (December 1984), 584.
- ¹⁸⁷ NPS, *Final EIS, Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine*, December 1984, 604.
- ¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 584-89, 599-604; *Anchorage Daily Times*, May 23, 1984, B-6; May 24, 1984, C-1; June 3, 1984, A-1; June 4, 1984, B-1; June 14, 1984, A-1.

- ¹⁸⁹ NPS, *Final EIS, Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine*, December 1984, ix, xiii, 19-25, 67-70; *Federal Register* 50 (March 22, 1985), 11595; NPS, *Draft General Management Plan, DENA*, March 1985, 33; NPS, *Final General Management Plan, DENA*, October 1986, 58.
- ¹⁹⁰ *Federal Register* 45 (December 3, 1980), 80192-93; *Federal Register* 47 (August 19, 1982), 36297-98; materials in various mining plans of operation folders (1979-1982), Boxes 34 and 35, DARC, DENA Archives.
- ¹⁹¹ *Anchorage Daily Times*, August 10, 1982, B-3; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 10, 1982, A-1; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 14, 1982, B-1; various correspondence, "Jim Fuksa, et al. (1982)" folder, Box 36, DARC, DENA Archives.
- ¹⁹² *Federal Register* 48 (March 25, 1983), 12599-12600; *Federal Register* 49 (March 30, 1984), 12768-69; *Federal Register* 49 (April 27, 1984), 18191-92; *Federal Register* 49 (June 25, 1984), 25907; *Federal Register* 50 (May 1, 1985), 18580; *Federal Register* 50 (May 15, 1985), 20298.
- ¹⁹³ T. K. Hinderman, *Plan of Operations, Kantishna Mining Company, Howtay Association Claims 11 through 24, Caribou Creek, DENA*, May 1986, 1; Joe Van Horn interview, August 3, 2007; Steve Carwile interview, November 8, 2007.
- ¹⁹⁴ "Claims, Plans of Operation (1983-1984)" folder, Box 35, DARC, DENA Archives;
- ¹⁹⁵ Michael V. Finley to "Dear Claimant and/or Operator," June 4, 1985, in Catalog 9169, DENA Archives.
- ¹⁹⁶ *Anchorage Daily Times*, July 24, 1985, A-1, A-7; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 24, 1985, A-1, A-12; *Environmental Law Reporter* 15 (1985), 21048; *Federal Reporter*, 2nd Series, vol. 803 (1986), 466.
- ¹⁹⁷ *Northern Alaska Environmental Center, et al. v. Donald P. Hodel, et al.* (J85-009 Civ.), "Preliminary Injunction," July 22, 1985; William C. Welch to T.J. Koppenberg, August 5, 1985, in Catalog 9169, DENA Archives.
- ¹⁹⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, December 10, 1985, C-10.
- ¹⁹⁹ SAR, 1985, 2; various entries, "Eric Weiler (1984-1985)" folder, Box 36, DARC, DENA Archives.
- ²⁰⁰ T. K. Hinderman, *Plan of Operations, Kantishna Mining Company, Howtay Association Claims 11 through 24, Caribou Creek, DENA*, May 1986, 1; *Federal Register* 51 (November 4, 1986), 40084; Steve Carwile interview, July 23, 2007.
- ²⁰¹ SAR, 1986, 2; Alex Carter interview, September 5, 2007. Initial park staff members included Phil Brease (formerly of the BLM's Glennallen office) and Tom Ford (a former Death Valley NM mining specialist).
- ²⁰² *Federal Register* 51 (May 7, 1986), 16903; NPS, *Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Mining in Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska* (Anchorage, the author, February 1989), 4, 383-85; Bryan Swift to Supt. DENA, December 21, 1987, in Catalog 9169, DENA Archives.
- ²⁰³ NPS, *Draft EIS, Mining in DENA* (February 1989), 4.
- ²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, vi, 15-17; NPS, *Briefing Report, Draft EISs, Cumulative Impacts of Mining: DENA, WRST, YUCH, Alaska* (March 1989), 15-16, Entry 784, DENA RML; *Federal Register* 54 (April 13, 1989), 14871.
- ²⁰⁵ *Federal Register* 54 (May 4, 1989), 19249; *Federal Register* 54 (June 15, 1989), 25506; NPS, *Final Environmental Impact Statement, Volume 1, Mining in Denali National Park and Preserve* (Anchorage, the author, April 1990), vii-viii.
- ²⁰⁶ NPS, *Final EIS, Mining in DENA, Volume 1* (April 1990), v, 22, 167-71; *Federal Register* 55 (May 30, 1990), 21949-50; *Federal Register* 55 (June 8, 1990), 23477; *Federal Register* 55 (July 2, 1990), 27308; NPS, *Record of Decision, Final EIS, Cumulative Impacts of Mining, DENA*, August 21, 1990, in DENA Library; Alex Carter interview, September 5, 2007.
- ²⁰⁷ NPS, *Draft EIS, Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study, Alaska* (May 1983), viii-xi.
- ²⁰⁸ Alaska Land Use Council, *Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study Report* (May 1984), 11-17, VII-1.
- ²⁰⁹ *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 3, 1984, A-10; June 4, 1984, B-1.
- ²¹⁰ *Anchorage Daily Times*, July 14, 1984, B-2.
- ²¹¹ *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 4, 1984, B-1; NPS, *Final EIS, Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study Report, DENA*, December 1984, 609-10.
- ²¹² NPS, *Draft General Management Plan, DENA* (March 1985), 33-34, 41-43, 63; NPS, *General Management Plan, DENA* (October 1986), 59-60, 79-81, 98, 203-06.
- ²¹³ Phil Brease, email to author, November 20, 2007.
- ²¹⁴ SAR, 1988, 2; Phil Brease review comments, October 4, 2007. The validity-examination process lasted until 1991, perhaps longer; see SAR, 1991, 11.
- ²¹⁵ NPS, *Draft EIS, Mining in DENA* (February 1989), 16.
- ²¹⁶ SAR, 1989, Addendum, 2; NPS, *Final EIS, Mining in DENA* (April 1990), 16.
- ²¹⁷ Bill Sherwonit, "No Going Back," *Alaska Magazine* 56 (April 1990), 68-71; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 13, 1989, F-10.
- ²¹⁸ SAR, 1987, 2, 6; Sherwonit, "No Going Back," 67-68; *Anchorage Daily News*, December 25, 1990, A-1, A-12; Bryan Swift to Supt. DENA, December 21, 1987, in Catalog 9169, DENA Archives.
- ²¹⁹ Bill Sherwonit, "No Going Back," *Alaska* 56 (April 1990), 30-31. Tom Bundtzen, a State of Alaska geologist, agrees with Sherwonit that most gave up the fight. But Paul and Eric Weiler, twin brothers with

placer claims on Glen Creek, "decided to stay and fight" (according to one reporter) "beginning a course of civil disobedience they believe the founding fathers would have been proud of." *Anchorage Daily News*, December 25, 1990, A-12.

²²⁰ NPS, *Record of Decision, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Cumulative Effects of Mining, DENA*, August 21, 1990, pp. 3-4; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 6, 1990, C-4. The NPS's acquisition prices had been generated by appraiser Norman Lee in a November 1988 report; see NPS, *Draft EIS, Mining in DENA* (February 1989), 263-71.

²²¹ NPS, *Kantishna Resource Management Plan*, DENA, July 5, 1990, in Carwile files; *New York Times*, July 30, 1990, 9; SAR, 1990, 1.

²²² SAR, 1991, 8. As noted in the *Anchorage Daily News* (August 13, 1989, F-10), the NPS was particularly interested in the Quigley Ridge property. The site offered a high potential for tourism development, the proliferation of which the agency hoped to avoid.

²²³ NPS, *Record of Decision, Final EIS, Cumulative Effects of Mining, DENA*, August 21, 1990, p. 4.

²²⁴ *Federal Reporter*, 2nd Series, vol. 961 (1992), p. 886; Chris Bockmon email, July 25, 2007.

²²⁵ SAR, 1991, 11; *Federal Register* 56 (July 18, 1991), 33040.

²²⁶ Steve Carwile interview, July 23, 2007.

²²⁷ Sherwonit, "No Going Back," 31; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 6, 1990, C-4; *New York Times*, July 30, 1990, 9; "RV Park Planned Within Denali," *National Parks* 64 (September/October 1990), 9.

²²⁸ SAR, 1990, 2; SAR, 1991, 11; SAR, 1993, 2; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 6, 1992, A-1, A-16; June 13, 1992, B-1, B-3; Steve Carwile interview, November 8, 2007.

²²⁹ "NPS Team Examines Denali Mining Claims," *National Parks* 69 (May/June 1995), 18-19.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 26, 1997, B-3.

²³¹ Denali Task Force, *Denali Task Force Report; Findings and Recommendations for the National Park Service Advisory Board*, October 25, 1994, 6.

²³² *Anchorage Daily News*, November 13, 1993, E-9; Frank Murkowski, "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions" for S. 2542, October 7, 1994, in www.thomas.gov; *Congressional Record* 140 (October 7, 1994), 28991.

²³³ "NPS Team Examines Denali Mining Claims," 18-19; Chuck Gilbert interview, July 24, 2007; Denali – Mining Acquisition Task Group to Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, "Task Group Report," June 1, 1995, in "Kantishna Legislative Takings, Sec. 12, P.L. 105-83" file, park general files, Lands Division, AKRO.

²³⁴ SAR, 1996, 11; SAR, 1997, 1, 5; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 26, 1997, B-3; *Federal Register* 60 (June 28, 1995), 33428; *Federal Register* 62 (February 24, 1997), 8264; *Federal Register* 62 (July 14, 1997), 37592.

²³⁵ NPS, *Draft Development Concept Plan, Environmental Impact Statement, Entrance Area and Road Corridor*, June 1996, 61, 64, 66; NPS, *Final Development Concept Plan [and] Abbreviated Final Environmental Impact Statement, Entrance Area and Road Corridor*, December 1996, 25, 31.

²³⁶ H.R. 2107, Section 121, as reported in the Senate, July 22, 1997, in www.thomas.gov; Chuck Gilbert interview, July 24, 2007. Purchase prices under this bill would be determined by a judge or jury, and buyout funds would come from a "permanent judgment appropriation" administered by the Department of Justice.

²³⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, July 26, 1997, B-1, B-3.

²³⁸ Public Law 105-83, (November 14, 1997), Sec. 120, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 111 (1997), 1564-66; SAR, 1997, 1-2; *Anchorage Daily News*, November 15, 1997, D-1.

²³⁹ NPS, *Denali National Park and Preserve Briefing Presentation: Legislative Taking of Mining Claims*, July 1999, in AKRO Lands Division files; "Alaska Delegation: Many Alaskans Take Advantage of Option to Sell Mining Claims in Denali National Park" (press release), February 13, 1998, in "Kantishna Legislative Takings, Sec. 12, P.L. 105-83" file, park general files, AKRO Lands Division.

²⁴⁰ NPS, *Briefing Statement, Mining Claim Acquisitions, DENA*, April 9, 2007, in AKRO Lands Division files; Chuck Gilbert interview, July 19, 2007; Steve Carwile email, July 19, 2007.

²⁴¹ Natural Resource Consultants, *Stampede Mine – Alaska, Report of Visit*, August 1977, 3, 12.

²⁴² SAR, 1980, 4; William E. Brown, *Denali, Symbol of the Alaskan Wild*, 194-95; University of Alaska news release, February 8, 1980, in "11-101, 105-110 Stampede Mine, Ltd." folder, AKRO Lands Division files.

²⁴³ Chris Lambert, *Stampede Mine – Alaska, Potential Benefits as Part of the School of Mineral Industry, University of Alaska, Fairbanks*, October 22, 1979; Mark W. Osgood to Ross Kavanagh, June 14, 1984; both in "DENA/Stampede: OL Background Materials" folder, Logan Hovis Collection; Steve Carwile interview, July 23, 2007. Dennis Fradley, with the "Voice of the Times" (*Anchorage Daily News*, November 13, 1993, E-9), stated that Professor Scott Huang from UAF's School of Mineral Engineering "intended to use the mine for research and education, but the Park Service blocked it by limiting access to foot or by air, by prohibiting the improvement of a trail leading to the site and by requiring an expensive, detailed plan of mining operations – just to use the mine for classroom use."

²⁴⁴ Brown, *Denali, Symbol of the Alaskan Wild*, 195; Bill Tanner and Bill Brown, *Investigation Report, Stampede Mine, DENA*, ca. May 1987, in "DENA/Stampede: Current Issues, 1993-94" folder, Logan Hovis Collection;

Shannon and Wilson, *Draft Site Inspection, Stampede Mine, DENA* (Fairbanks, the author, March 1995), 4; Mike Shields, "Stampede Mine, 1987, A Brief History of a Failed Explosives Disposal Operation," unpublished manuscript, ca. 1995, Steve Carwile files.

²⁴⁵ Mike Shields, *Stampede Mine, 1987, A Brief History of a Failed Explosives Disposal Operation*, 1995, in Logan Hovis Collection, AKRO; Mike Shields, email to the author, August 2, 2007. Shields served as the agency's regional blasting officer from 1991 through 1996, but his NPS blasting experience began in 1960. His report concluded that "the basic cause of this fiasco was ignorance, and its near cousin, assumed expertise. The NPS people obviously didn't know anything about explosives, and in the face of assumed expertise never seriously questioned it. The [Army], trained to destroy bombs and shells, obviously knew little about [the on-site explosives] and nothing about blast physics.... Neither party ever thought to consult anyone outside their immediate realm, or considered postponing the operation once it started. Together they let assumptions, erroneous information, and the press of time once on the site lead them into disaster."

²⁴⁶ Ted Birkedal (ARO-RCR) to ARD, Resource Services, January 5, 1994; Steve Peterson to Supt. DENA, December 8, 1992, both in "DENA/Stampede: Current Issues, 1993-94" folder, Logan Hovis Collection; U.S. Interior Department, Office of Hearings and Appeals, "Order," IBLA 90-276, June 19, 1990; Steve Carwile interview, July 23, 2007.

²⁴⁷ Charles M. Gilbert to Pete Rutledge, February 11, 1994; Gilbert to Richard H. Follett, June 15, 1994; both in "DENA/Stampede: Current Issues, 1993-94" folder, Logan Hovis Collection; Chuck Gilbert interview, July 24, 2007. The university's holdings consisted of 5 patented claims: 2 placer claims and 3 lode claims.

²⁴⁸ H.R. 4602, Engrossed Amendment as Agreed to by Senate, July 26, 1994; H.R. 4602, Public Print, July 26, 1994, both in www.thomas.gov; *Congressional Record* 140 (July 26, 1994), 17993-94; *Anchorage Daily News*, July 29, 1994, B-4; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, July 31, 1994, B-3; Chuck Gilbert interview, July 24, 2007. The Alaska Land Use Council, in 1988, had first broached the idea of NPS restitution for the damage caused by the April 1987 explosion. The council's resolution was apparently approved by university officials and had been forwarded to the Alaska Congressional Delegation at that time. Curtis McVee to Donald D. O'Dowd, November 22, 1988, in "11-101, 105-110 Stampede Mine, Ltd." folder, AKRO Lands Division files.

²⁴⁹ SAR, 1995, 7, 8; H.R. 1977, Engrossed Amendment as Agreed to by Senate, August 9, 1995; H.R. 1977, Public Print, August 10, 1995, both in www.thomas.gov; *Congressional Record* 141 (August 9, 1995), 22854-55, 22858, 22869.

²⁵⁰ H.R. 2107, Engrossed Amendment as Agreed to by Senate, September 18, 1997; H.R. 2107, Public Print, September 19, 1997; Public Law 105-83, Sec. 136, November 14, 1997, all in www.thomas.gov; NPS, *Briefing Presentation: Legislative Taking of Mining Claims, DENA*, July 1999, 3; *Congressional Record* 143 (September 18, 1997), 19445-48; Steve Carwile interview, July 24, 2007.

²⁵¹ *Federal Register* 42 (January 26, 1977), 4840.

²⁵² Materials in various mining plans of operation folders (1979-1982), Boxes 34 and 35, DARC, DENA Archives.

²⁵³ SAR, 1987, 1, 3; Joe Van Horn, interview with the author, August 2, 2007.

²⁵⁴ SAR, 1989, 3; SAR, 1991, 10-11.

²⁵⁵ NPS, *Draft EIS, Cumulative Impacts of Mining*, vii, 14-22; *Final EIS, Cumulative Impacts of Mining, Volume 1*, vii, 22.

²⁵⁶ NPS, *Record of Decision, Final EIS, Cumulative Impacts of Mining*, 5.

²⁵⁷ Kevin Meyer, "Kantishna Debris Removal 1993, End of the Season Report," in NPS, *Kantishna Cleanup 93: Equipment and Debris Cleanup, Drum and Battery Removal on Abandoned and Acquired Mining Properties, DENA* (Anchorage, the author, ca. 1993), 1-4.

²⁵⁸ SAR, 1997, 4; 1998, 3.

²⁵⁹ SAR, 2002, 1; 2003, 32; 2004, 15; 2005; 2006, 21; NPS, "Disturbed Lands Restoration Program," *DENA Resource Stewardship Strategy*, June 11, 1997 (draft), 106-07, 128; NPS, *Briefing Presentation: Reclamation of Disturbed Areas in DENA*, July 1999, in DENA Public Affairs files; Steve Carwile interview, November 8, 2007.

²⁶⁰ NPS, *Environmental Overview and Analysis of Mining Effects, DENA*, September 1981, 153; NPS, *Final EIS, Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study Report*, December 1984, 143, 145; NPS, "Mining Claims in the Kantishna Hills Study Area" (Drawing 40141A), in NPS, *Draft EIS, Cumulative Impacts of Mining, DENA*, February 1989, map pocket.

²⁶¹ Joy Chamberlin, "Development Threatens the Heart of Denali," *National Parks* 71 (September/October 1997), 19-20; Steve Carwile interview, July 25, 2007; *Anchorage Daily News*, October 2, 1999, E-1.

²⁶² Environmental groups felt that the Spruce 4 area was suitable for wilderness, even though Congress had not designated it as wilderness and the NPS, in its 1988 wilderness study, had not recommended the area as a candidate for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

²⁶³ Chamberlin, "Development," 19-20; Chip Dennerlein, "Regional Report – Alaska," *National Parks* 72 (May/June 1998), 16; Katurah Mackay, "Lodge Threatens Park Wilderness," *National Parks* 72 (November/December 1998), 15-16; SAR, 1998, 2.

- ²⁶⁴ *Federal Register* 63 (March 19, 1998), 13427-28; *Federal Register* 63 (October 6, 1998), 53694; *Federal Register* 64 (February 8, 1999), 6115; *Federal Register* 64 (August 2, 1999), 41944-45.
- ²⁶⁵ NPS, *Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Spruce Creek Access, DENA*, June 1999, iii; *Federal Register* 64 (August 2, 1999), 41944-45; *Anchorage Daily News*, September 15, 1999, A-1.
- ²⁶⁶ *Anchorage Daily News*, September 15, 1999, A-1.
- ²⁶⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, September 15, 1999, A-1; *Anchorage Daily News*, October 2, 1999, E-1; *Anchorage Daily News*, November 20, 1999, E-11; NPS, *Draft EIS, Spruce Creek Access, Summary – 2*.
- ²⁶⁸ *Federal Register* 65 (March 7, 2000), 12028; Elizabeth G. Daerr, "Regional Report, Alaska," *National Parks* 75 (March/April 2001), 20.
- ²⁶⁹ NPS, *Final Environmental Impact Statement, Spruce Creek Access, DENA*, June 2000, Summary – 2; *Federal Register* 67 (June 6, 2002), 39037.
- ²⁷⁰ Daerr, "Regional Report – Alaska," 20; Steve Martin to Jeff Barney, March 1, 2001, in Carwiile files.
- ²⁷¹ "Progress in Kantishna Mining Claim Acquisitions," *AK2Day*, February 4, 2002; Ryan Dougherty, "Regional Report," *National Parks* 76 (April-May 2002), 19.
- ²⁷² *Federal Register* 67 (June 6, 2002), 39037; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 16, 2002, B-1.
- ²⁷³ NPS, *Environmental Assessment, Spruce Creek Access, DENA*, April 2002), iii, 2-1, 2-5.
- ²⁷⁴ "Environmental Assessment for Access to Inholding on Spruce Creek in DENA" (DENA News Release), May 15, 2002, in DENA Public Affairs files; *Federal Register* 67 (June 6, 2002), 39037-38.

Appendix A. Park Visitation, Budget, and Staff, 1981 to Present

Note: Visitation is for calendar years, but budgets are for fiscal years.

Year	Visitation	Budget	FTE	Year	Visitation	Budget	FTE
1981	256,593	\$3,058,200	n.a.	1994	490,311	\$6,643,000	69
1982	321,868	3,896,900	58	1995	543,309	6,944,000	55
1983	346,082	4,635,600	43	1996	341,385	7,163,000	66
1984	395,099	4,369,800	42	1997	354,278	7,385,000	72
1985	436,545	4,563,500	48	1998	372,519	7,720,000	68
1986	529,749	4,398,000	42	1999	386,867	8,036,000	71
1987	575,013	4,910,100	46	2000	363,983	9,189,000	80
1988	592,431	4,914,900	56	2001	360,191	9,792,000	89
1989	543,640	5,088,000	53	2002	311,335	10,144,000	84
1990	546,693	5,418,000	58	2003	360,189	10,949,000	96
1991	558,870	5,803,000	66	2004	404,236	10,687,000	101
1992	503,674	6,056,000	63	2005	403,520	10,842,000	102
1993	505,565	6,696,000	63	2006	415,935	10,549,000	169

NOTES:

Regarding staffing, "FTE" indicates full-time equivalent personnel. Using this system, 4 seasonal employees who each work three months per year would count as one FTE, and n.a. means not available.

Visitation data are for recreational visits only. Until 1995, recreational visitation also included some incidental traffic near the east end of the park road. As noted in Chapter 10, NPS personnel adjusted the figures beginning in 1996 to more narrowly define recreational visitors.

Budgets are for operations (ONPS) accounts only. In various years, additional budgetary allotments have been made to the park in other accounting classifications.

Sources: For visitation, see various editions of the NPS, *Public Use of the National Parks: A Statistical Report* and the agency's Public Use Statistics Office website, <http://www2.nature.nps.gov/stats>. For budget and staffing data, see various annual editions of the U.S. Department of the Interior publication *Budget Justifications: National Park Service*.

Appendix B. Selected List of Park Employees, 1980 to present

Management:

Superintendents:

Frank J. Betts, August 1978-February 1980
Charles A. (Chuck) Budge (acting), March 1980-August 1980
Robert C. (Clay) Cunningham, August 1980-March 1989
Thomas W. Griffiths (acting), March 1989-June 1989
Russell W. Berry, June 1989-October 1994
Stephen P. Martin, October 1994-January 2002 (acting, October 1994-March 1995)
Diane Chung (acting), January 2002-February 2002
Paul R. Anderson, February 2002-November 2007
Elwood Lynn (acting), November 2007-present

Management Assistant:

Ralph Tingey, 1981-1990

Deputy Superintendent:

Linda (Toms) Buswell, 1989-1999
Diane Chung, 2000-2004

Assistant Superintendents:

Philip Hooge (Resources, Science and Learning), 2003-present
Elwood Lynn (Operations), 2004-2007

Rangers:

Chief Park Rangers:

Gary N. Brown, 1973-1981
Thomas W. Griffiths, 1981-1989
Ken Kehrer, Jr., 1989-2000
Tom Habecker (acting), 2000-2001
Nick Herring, 2001-2003
Tom Habecker (acting), 2003
Peter Armington, 2003-present

North District Rangers:

Tom Habecker, 1990-2005

East District Rangers (Savage Subdistrict, 1990-present):

Robert A. (Bob) Gerhard, 1976-1984
Ken Kehrer, Jr., 1984-1989
Gerry Reynolds, 1991-1994
Brenda Bussard, 1995 (acting)
Chuck Passek, 1995-2000
Ann Marie Chytra, 2000-2004

West District Rangers (Wonder Lake Subdistrict, 1990-present):

Craig Stowers, 1980-1981
Brian Swift, 1981-1986
Bernadette Kane, 1991
Tom Chisdock, 1991-1995
Sandra Kogl, 1995
Mark Motsko, 1995-2002

South District Rangers (based in Talkeetna):

Robert R. (Bob) Seibert, 1984-1991
J.D. Swed, 1992-2000
Daryl Miller, 2000-present

Interpreters and Resource Managers:

Chief of Interpretation:

Bill Truesdell, 1975-1981
Doug Cuillard, 1982-1987
George Wagner, 1987-1991
Thea Nordling, 1992-1996
Lisa Eckert, 1996-1998

Blanca Stransky, 1999-2006
Ingrid Nixon, 2006-present

Kennels Managers:

Sandra Kogl, 1975-1989
Gary Koy, 1989-2002
Karen Fortier, 2002-present

Resource Management Specialists:

John Dalle-Molle, 1978-1991
Jim Benedict, 1991-1992
Gordon Olson, 1992-2003 (Chief of Resources)

Maintenance and Operations:

Chiefs of Maintenance (Maintenance General Foremen prior to 1985):

Dickie Stansberry, 1977-1982
Jack O'Neale, 1982-1985
Bob Butcher, 1985-1991
Mike Shields, 1991-1996
Elwood Lynn, 1996-2005
Dutch Scholten, 2005-present

Roads and Trails Maintenance Foremen:

James Rogers, 1973-1992
Dick McKenzie (acting), 1992-1993
Bill Friesen, 1993-2000
Brad Ebel (West District), 2000-present
Tim Taylor (East District), 2000-present

Buildings and Utilities Foremen:

Larry Keith, 1981-1994
Hershel Lester, 1994-2002
George Keers, 2002-2007
Greg Timeche (acting), 2007
Juan Gomez, 2007-present

Fleet Managers:

Bill Friesen, 2000-present

Trails Foremen:

Chuck Tomkiewicz, 2005-present

Administration:

Administration Chiefs:

Beth Scheen, 1970s-1982
Raymond Kremer, 1982-1991
Joanne Timmins, 1992-1996
Marcus Hathaway, 1996-1999
Julie Wilkerson, 2000-present

Concessions Chiefs:

Jane Anderson, 1985-1988
JoAnn Unruh, 1988-1989
Dorothy (Dottie) Anderson, 1989-1992
Dave Nemeth, 1992-1996
Chris Jones, 1996-1998
Mary Wysong (acting), 1998-1999
Nick Hardigg, 1999-2002
Mary Wysong (acting), 2002-2003
Donna Sisson, 2003-present

Planning Chiefs:

Nancy Swanton, 1996-2001
Mike Tranel, 2002-2008

A Note About Sources

During the preparation of this second administrative history volume, the author attempted (within necessary time and budgetary constraints) to locate and use a broad range of source materials that would provide a serviceable park management history. Soon after he began his research, he recognized that the volume of park-related materials was too great to allow full access to them all. Many materials, therefore, were skipped. Inasmuch as many of these records are located in the Headquarters-“C Camp” area of Denali National Park and Preserve—in its library, its museum (which contains the park archives), in the superintendent’s office building and in numerous division offices—it was quickly recognized that gaining access to many of these materials would be a complex undertaking. Because the author lived in Anchorage, 240 miles south of park headquarters, any future researcher into the park’s history should be able to find a wealth of data at the park that was left untapped for this study by visiting the park and seeking out various catalogued and uncatalogued archival materials.

It was the author’s good fortune that historian Kristen Griffin, as part of an earlier effort, was able to assemble a wide range of park-related historical materials and make them accessible for this study. Ms. Griffin plumbed records at the park, at the National Archives, and elsewhere, and she methodically and carefully provided exact documentation for the overwhelming majority of source materials. A few agency records, however, could not be attributed to a specific bibliographic source. The author, in this case, decided to categorize each of these records by folder (when known) and then to give its bibliographic repository as the “Denali Administrative History Collection.” These materials—and in fact all of the materials gathered for this study—are in the Denali Administrative History Collection, which is now located in the museum archives at Denali National Park and Preserve.

When the author began investigating park records, he recognized that some historical records at the park (as alluded to above) were uncatalogued and poorly organized. Many boxes of records dating from the 1950s through the 1990s, for example, were found among heating equipment in the basement of the building where the superintendent’s office is located, and some scattered, uncatalogued historical records were found in the park museum archives. So far as is known, these records still remain at these loca-

tions, although plans call for them to be eventually moved and curated. Records that were used from these locations, specifically those pertaining to park planning and infrastructure projects, are not referred to by collection name; instead, they are referenced to the Denali Administrative History Collection.

One major collection encountered in the park museum was Catalog Number 9169. This massive data set, containing more than 30 boxes of park administrative records, includes materials as early as 1917 and as late as 2001; more than three-quarters of this material, however, dates from the 1960s and 1970s. When research began for this study, the records comprising this collection were uncatalogued. In order to properly classify and curate these records, these and similar materials were brought to the Alaska Regional Office’s curatorial unit in Anchorage during the summer of 2004, after which curator Nicole Jackelen began processing them. The much-needed curation of this newly-expanded collection is now complete, and thus only scattered materials used in this study are referenced as part of the “old” Catalog 9169. The collection’s reorganization, moreover, means that most if not all references in the present study to box numbers in Catalog 9169 are no longer valid. The fruit of Ms. Jackelen’s labor will be beneficial for years to come; any future researchers interested in the history of park administration and management will have a large trove of well-organized, relatively untouched records to peruse.

In addition to the records from Catalog 9169, tomorrow’s historians will have access to many other avenues of not-yet-analyzed archival material. For example, the park has several substantial archives—such as the Grant Pearson, Earl Pilgrim, and Harry Lick collections, plus a large assemblage of ranger and interpretive reports, research files, and an impressive array of historical photographs—which were largely bypassed for this study. Researchers for this study combed a broad range of records in three National Archives branches, but many NARA records—from both the National Park Service (RG 79) and from other record groups—have not been perused. The excellent Bill Brown Collection (Catalog 6857) has been perused, but by no means exhaustively. Future researchers will quickly recognize that many Denali articles, both in general-interest magazines and technical journals, were not consulted during the preparation of this report. And

the oral history field has barely been scratched; while researchers for this study interviewed various park superintendents and a few additional agency personnel, future historians will greatly benefit by interviewing a broad range of other park and regional-office employees, concession employees, state and borough officials, incidental business permit holders, leaders of park advocacy groups, and others who have played a role over the years in either carrying out or challenging the agency's mission.

It is recommended that all those interested in investigating the park's records first contact either Denali's museum specialist, Jane Lakeman, or its cultural resource specialist, Jane Bryant. Ms. Lakeman is in an excellent position to steer researchers toward the wealth of park historical materials within her purview, while Ms. Bryant is herself a storehouse of park history, both from the projects she has undertaken and from her personal experiences during her 40-odd years working in the park and its vicinity.

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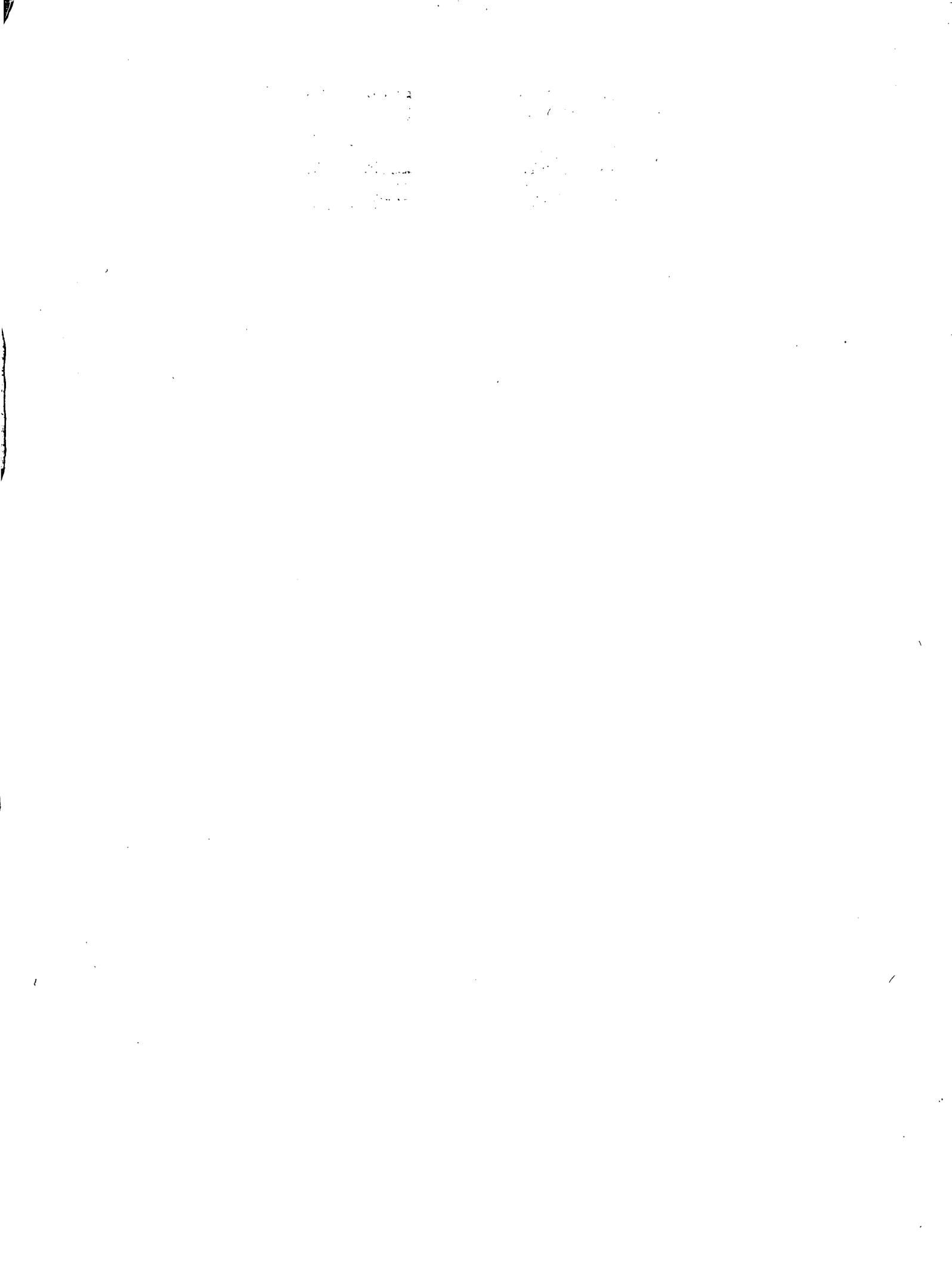
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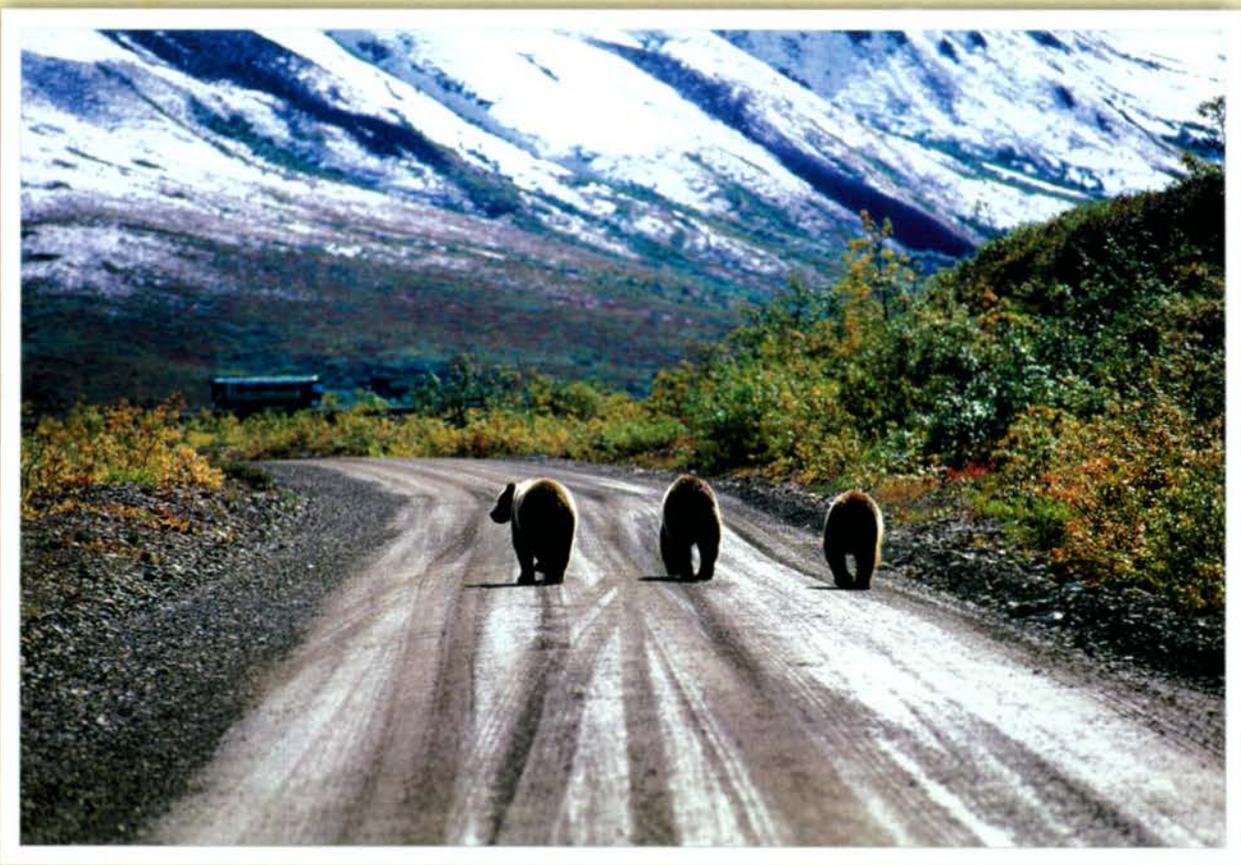
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— NPS mission statement