

**Denali National Park and Preserve
Superintendent's Report
FY 2012**

This was a year of transition, as several long-term employees with more than 100 years of park experience and knowledge between them retired by the end of the year. The class of 2012 included Superintendent Paul Anderson, Cultural Anthropologist Jane Bryant, Denali Visitor Center Supervisor Clare Curtis, and Administrative Officer Julie Wilkerson.

But what was not anticipated was the loss of Tom Meier, the park's pre-eminent wildlife biologist and wolf expert, who died unexpectedly at his home outside Denali National Park sometime during the weekend of August 11-12. Meier, age 61, was a Denali institution who was passionate about his work with the park's emblematic wolves. He began studying the species in 1976 with David Mech and came to Denali in 1986 to conduct fieldwork for the Denali wolf project with John Burch. He left in 1993 to pursue a doctorate, and from 1996 – 2004 worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the reintroduction of wolves in Montana.



Tom Meier during spring wolf survey

He came back to Denali in 2004 to lead the biological program and conduct predator/prey research. His influence went beyond the National Park Service due to his extensive knowledge of wolves and his ability to work with other agencies and independent researchers on wolf management issues. Through his presentations and seminars on the park's wolves he inspired countless numbers of park and concession employees, visitors, students, and others. A standing room only memorial service took place on August 27 at the Denali Visitor Center.

PARK ACCOMPLISHMENTS/SPECIAL EVENTS
PLANNING EFFORTS COMPLETED

The **Final Vehicle Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)** was released to the public on June 29. The Record of Decision was signed on September 27.

The plan describes three action alternatives and a no action alternative for managing vehicle use, including buses, park administrative use and private vehicles, on the Denali Park Road for the next 15-20 years.

Mt. McKinley Climbing Allocation EA finalized

The environmental assessment (EA) regarding the allocation of climbing permits between commercial guiding operators and independent, non-guided climbers was finalized, providing the NPS with the tools to more appropriately manage climbing use on Mt. McKinley. Under the current concession contracts, the number of guided climbers significantly exceeds the 25% allowed in the Backcountry Management Plan (BCMP). When the new concession contracts are issued in 2014, they must be consistent with BCMP limits, which were modified through the EA. After evaluating public comments, the NPS selected the flexible allocation alternative, which will retain historic use levels for commercially guided and independent climbers, and equitably allocate all unused permits annually between both groups.

DEDICATION OF NEW FACILITY

The “Cale Shaffer Building”, which houses the regional and park communication center (dispatch) and workspace for ranger and fire management staff, was officially dedicated on May 15. It is named after seasonal mountaineering ranger Cale Shaffer, who died in June 2000 when the plane carrying him, two mountaineering volunteers, and the pilot crashed in route to Base Camp. He had also worked for a season as the Wonder Lake ranger. The timing of the dedication event provided the opportunity for members of the Alaska Leadership Council, including the Regional Director, to attend.



Cale’s father Ron Shaffer (with camera) and cousin Pat McDonnell (second from right) in front of Shaffer building. Also pictured are Cale’s former supervisors Roger Robinson (far left) and retired ranger Mark Motsko (far right), and co-worker Maureen McLaughlin (center).

5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS COMPLETED

Tasks completed in 2012 included adding the pavers to Eielson Visitor Center paths, expanding the program offerings of the Murie Science and Learning Center, and engaging the public on the Draft Vehicle Management Plan. The strategic plan was posted on the park’s intranet site for comments/discussion, and also distributed to the divisions and work groups.

BERRY BEAR SCULPTURE INSTALLED

A larger than life-size bronze statue of a resting grizzly bear, an enlargement of a small sculpture by Alaska artist William B. Berry, was unveiled at its location in front of the Denali Visitor

Center during an informal ceremony that took place on September 7. Onlookers included park employees, local residents, and Alaska Geographic board members, who were meeting in the park over the weekend.

Superintendent Paul Anderson welcomed the gathering and spoke about the significance of artists and their contributions to Denali and the National Park system. Alaska Board Chairman Andy Hall, Wally Cole, long time community member and operator of Camp Denali/North Face Lodge, and Hannah Berry, the granddaughter of William D. Berry, also each addressed the assemblage.



Andy Hall, Paul Anderson, Wally Cole with grandson Oliver, and Hannah Berry with Berry bear sculpture

William D. Berry, who died in 1979, first came to Alaska in the early 1950's, when his wife Elizabeth got a job at Camp Denali. While raising his family on the shores of Deneki Lake near the park, he captured Denali's wildlife on canvas and in sculpture. He is perhaps best known for his children's book *Deneki: An Alaskan Moose*.

The casting and installation of the eight foot statue was made possible by a generous gift of Elizabeth Berry to the Denali Institute (now Alaska Geographic) to support arts in Denali.

DENALI QUARTER OFFICALLY LAUNCHED



The Denali National Park and Preserve quarter, the 15th in the America the Beautiful series, was officially launched on November 15 during a ceremony that took place at the Tri-Valley Community center in Healy, Alaska in partnership with the U.S. Mint. Denali's Assistant Superintendent for Operations, Elwood Lynn, was Master of Ceremonies for the event, which included music by the Denali Borough School District choir, presentation of colors by student members of Eielson 71st Civil Air Patrol, and remarks by Acting Superintendent Jeff Mow, park historian Jane Bryant, and David Croft, plant manager for the U.S. Mint at Denver.

Mow and Croft passed out quarters to the students near the stage, and student council officers assisted in distributing quarters to other young people age 18 and under. Event participants then lined up to purchase rolls of the newly minted quarters at the Healy Branch of First National

Bank of Alaska located in the building. Approximately 400 people attended the event (including 200 students and staff from the Denali Borough's three schools, the Denali Pre-school and Learning Center), coin enthusiasts from as far away as Kansas, California, Illinois and Indiana, NPS staff, and local residents.



Master of Ceremonies Assistant Superintendent Elwood Lynn making remarks at coin launch

ACCOMPLISHMENTS BY DIVISION

ADMINISTRATION

This year was one of significant changes for the division. Administrative Officer Julie Wilkerson retired on September 30 from the position she had held since July 2000. She had worked at Denali since 1986 in a variety of administrative positions, including budget analyst.

Kathleen Przybylski, Administrative Officer at Voyageurs National Park in Minnesota, was hired to fill the position. She arrived in early September for a planned overlap with Julie, which facilitated a smooth transition during the year-end budget closeout.

The other huge challenge was the service-wide changeover to the new FBMS financial management system. FBMS supersedes previously existing systems, such as FFS, and has involved a long extended training period for numerous park staff from all divisions. It will not be fully implemented until early 2013.

The volunteer program continued to provide a huge assist to the park. VIP Program Coordinator Kathleen Kelly is based at Denali and coordinates volunteer needs for all parks in the Alaska Region. Denali's 504 volunteers donated more than 58,000 hours of service to the park.

IT Workgroup

New buildings and increased demands in the previous ones create an ever increasing workload for IT. Prior to moving the Comm Center, rangers, and fire staff into the Shaffer Building, IT had to install and configure new equipment and network connections. As older buildings were renovated and personnel shifted to new offices, IT staff rewired buildings and updated networking capability. They upgraded over 200 desktops and laptops to Windows 7 and replaced over 40 obsolete desktops and laptops. They also rebuilt the Talkeetna server and successfully recovered the data after the old one completely failed.

COMMERCIAL SERVICES (previously known as Concessions Management)

Jim LeBel received a richly deserved promotion within the division. Halston Sleets, a SCEP student hire, became the newest member of the Commercial Services team in May. She will return to the park in the summer 2013 after graduation from Tuskegee University. Concession specialist Scott Burch left Denali for a position at Crater Lake National Park in August.

In addition to personnel changes, the team implemented various changes to division operations. The safety requirements outlined in the Director's Order #50C (Public Risk Management Program) were applied to the Type 3 contracts, ensuring that concessioners provide a safe environment for park visitors. Staff completed drafts of the commercial services contract for transportation (Type 1) and mountain guiding. The division also developed and implemented a food and beverage pricing model that has reduced by nearly 30% the time it takes to compile and analyze rates.

As a means to reduce plastic bottle waste, this year Doyon/ARAMARK Joint Venture installed a hydration filling station inside the Morino Grill (in addition to the one installed the previous year at the Wilderness Access Center). Plastic bottled water sales have been eliminated from these venues with no noted negative impact to visitors. The National Park Service installed a filling station at the Murie Science and Learning Center.



Tour driver Gary Seekins at Wilderness Access Center filling station – photo from Doyon/ARAMARK JV

As part of the Call to Action initiatives, the division is working with Doyon/ARAMARK Joint Venture to provide and promote healthy, sustainable, and locally produced food options for park visitors. Specific guidelines that will be required for the next concessioner are being developed for the new prospectus.

The fee collection operation purchased two computerized cash registers and back-up registers for park headquarters, which will make the operation more efficient and reduce the reconciliation process time by 60%. The time needed to count coins was also significantly reduced by the installation of an automated coin counting system. Fee collection staff also established an account with the local bank branch for deposits and transactions.

CULTURAL RESOURCES AND SUBSISTENCE

Museum Staff Changes: Kimberly Arthur was hired as a Museum Technician with the departure of Museum Curator Kirk Dietz for a position in Hawaii. Arthur, a recent master degree graduate, is originally from the Navajo Reservation in Arizona. Her previous archival work experience includes cataloging photographs and negatives for the Arizona Historical Society in Tucson, volunteer archiving at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, and completing a media archives internship at the Cultural Resources Center within the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian.

Museum Collection: To date more than 1000 cultural resources and 83 natural history objects, photographs, slides and negatives have been photographed, scanned and imported into Re:discovery (ICMS). An additional 102 digital images of Denali herbarium specimens on loan to University of Alaska Fairbanks have been downloaded and saved from the ARCTOS database. So far 6.5% of the collection, which totals over 19,000 images, has been digitized.

In spring 2012 over 1000 slides taken by Adolf Murie were accessioned, cataloged, scanned and disseminated into three finding aids – one corresponding to the flora manuscript donated the previous year, and two additional ones that cover fauna and general scenery of Denali and other locations. Five binders of Murie's personal collection of herbarium specimens were also accessioned and cataloged, although they have yet to be digitized. The NPS is continuing to seek funding for the publication of the manuscript with its associated images.

2013 Centennial Celebration of First McKinley Ascent: In the spring the park partnered with University of Alaska Fairbanks, Museum of the North to begin planning the 2013 special exhibition which will be celebrating the Centennial of the First Ascent of Denali.

New Archeologist: Phoebe Gilbert was hired in March 2012 as the park archeologist. She holds a B.A. in anthropology from North Central College in Illinois and an M.A. from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. For the past four years she worked as an archeologist for Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve and Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.

Archeology and Geomorphology of Ancient Lake Minchumina: Two archeologists spent three weeks in the northwest corner of the park as part of the second year of a three year project to map the ancient shoreline of Lake Minchumina and explore the region for archeological sites.



Metal arrow and primer can found at archeology site

Highlights include locating a new buried prehistoric site at Seven Mile Hill, and identifying a new prehistoric site with pit features and testing an additional buried site in the Beaverlog Lakes area. Buried sites such as these are rare and very important for understanding the prehistory of the park, as they provide information not found at other types of sites. Charcoal samples collected from these sites will be used to radiocarbon date the sites. Relic beach ridges surveyed and mapped as part of this field work indicate that ancient Lake Minchumina was much larger than the current lake, with a water level 4-5 meters above the current lake level. This work supplies important information for understanding climate change and will help future survey efforts in the area by indicating where people may have settled.

Archeological Site Condition Assessments: During surveys for compliance and inventory, 28 new archeology sites were located and recorded and 34 site conditions assessments were conducted. This work increased the number of known sites in the park by almost 10%, but it is likely only a small fraction of the number of actual sites in the park. To date, less than 1% of the park has been surveyed for archeological resources.

1932 Lindley-Liek Movie: This first known film footage of a climb of Mt. McKinley was professionally transferred to digital format. An audio recording was paired to the film footage to produce a DVD of a 40-minute interpretive film with a brief introduction.

Retirement of Park Historian Jane Bryant: The final day of 2012 heralded the end of an era, as Jane Bryant shut down her computer and turned off her office light for the last time. She started working for the park in 1976, making her one of the park's longest tenured employees. Her jobs at the park included ranger-naturalist, Superintendent's secretary, payroll clerk, procurement clerk, campground cleaner, and cultural resources technician. Her final position as the park's cultural anthropologist allowed her to follow her passion of researching and documenting the history of this park from the gold rush days of Kantishna to the present.



Jane Bryant with Fannie Quigley cutout on her last day of work

Oral History: Between 1995 and 2009, Jane conducted and recorded more than 28 oral history interviews were conducted and recorded. During 2012 she digitized, transcribed, and assembled

supporting material. The collections will be accessioned into the Denali Museum Collection for preservation and future use. The informants and topics include:

- William Nancarrow: More than 16 hours of recorded interviews, detailing his arrival at Mt. McKinley National Park in 1948 and subsequent events during his long career with the NPS. In December 2006, Bill donated three personally-produced 16-mm films for transfer to digital format, which he later narrated. These provide a glimpse into life and activities at Mt. McKinley National Park in the early 1950s.
- Beatrice Herning: Came to McKinley Park in 1938 with her father, a CCC supervisor. She met her husband, Harold Herning, who was a ranger in 1938-40 and later held mining claims on Mt. Eielson and built the Herning Cabin. She provided 60 digitized photos from a family album.
- Louise Gallop: How she purchased the Discovery Claim on Friday Creek in 1967, built Gallop Cabin and oversaw mining on Friday Creek with heavy equipment in the early 1980s.
- Ginny Wood and Florence Collins: The two pilots tell about their exploits making aerial equipment drops for two climbing expeditions on Mt. McKinley in 1954.
- Thayer McKinley Expedition 50th reunion, 2004: Participants gathered at Camp Denali to reminisce. Their discussions and narrated slide show were recorded on digital video and audio.

Subsistence

Denali Subsistence Management Plan: Work continues on updating Denali's Subsistence Management Plan, including the development of a draft layout and format which will be shared with other parks when finalized.

Student project - How Communities Perceive Climate Change at the Local Level: Corrie Knapp (Ph.D. student from University of Alaska Fairbanks) made visits to Cantwell, Healy, Lake Minchumina, McKinley Village, Nikolai and Talkeetna to interview community members about the changes they have noticed in relation to climate change. She completed 83 interviews with subsistence community members (40), park staff (14), park bus drivers (8) and other long-term residents of local, road-accessible communities including pilots, mountain guides, bus-drivers, long-term business owners and amateur naturalists (21). Nineteen of the interviews have been transcribed. Her study will provide information about observed changes, perceptions of system function, and identify indicators that communities are, or would be, interested in monitoring in order to make adaptation planning decisions.

Denali Community Subsistence Ethnography: Melanie Reed (a M.S. student from the University of Utah) has been funded by the NPS to do a study focusing on subsistence use of natural resources in and around Denali National Park in the interior region of Alaska. Given the cultural and economic connection of these communities to the land and its resources, researchers believe the area provides the opportunity to study the significance of subsistence use among Native and non-Native individuals.

INTERPRETATION

Training, Coaching and Evaluation of Partner Interpreters: Park staff provided pre-season trainings on interpretation to staff from Alaska Geographic, Denali Education Center, Doyon/ARAMARK Joint Venture, ARAMARK (Explore Denali), three Kantishna Lodges and, for the first time, the Alaska Mountaineering School in Talkeetna.

The Web: Denali continued to maintain a presence on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Flickr. There is a variety of new and very popular multimedia features both on the park website and on social media sites. Highlights include a suite of 29 panoramic images, featuring the ability for the user to zoom in to great detail; a brief “happy holidays” video featuring the kennels manager and sled dog pups; “The Puppy Paws” video series, about the breeding and training of Denali’s sled dogs and a beautiful time-lapse video, set to music written specifically for it, featuring aurora activity from the winter of 2011 – 2012.

Distance Learning: Park education specialists piloted online delivery of two education programs, launched in fall 2012. Park staff used Skype to instruct 968 students in 13 states, teaching them about Denali Geology and the Science of Sled Dogs. The pilot program provided valuable experience working with the equipment and online systems, as well as feedback that helped to refine the curricula.



Education specialist Rachel Jenks interacting with 3rd graders from Aurora, Nebraska. Photo by Barrett Stinson

Summer Bulletin Board Re-design: The media team created roughly sixty new Bulletin Board panels for display at various park locations. Highlights included visitor orientation, park safety, park interpretive themes, and social media.

Premier of New Trail Guides/ Campground Guides: The trail guides, with illustrations produced with Alaska Geographic, are available in print and downloadable pdfs from the park website. Trails featured are: McKinley Station Trail, Triple Lakes Trail, Mt. Healy Overlook Trail, Roadside Trail, Rock Creek Trail. The campground guides are one bulletin board panel highlighting an interpretive feature located near or at the campground as well as an accompanying activity. Rack Cards of these panels are available for download from the park website. Campgrounds featured are: Savage, Sanctuary, Teklanika, Igloo, and Wonder Lake.

Special Projects: The park media specialist coordinated with the Alaska Regional Office to produce short videos highlighting diversity in the workplace. The videos featured stories from

staff representing the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community. The videos are available on the Alaska Regional web page and were featured at Anchorage Pride 2012.

Denali Music Festival: In partnership with the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival, Denali conducted the first annual Denali Music Festival featuring the premier of the original composition *Denali* by composer Stephen Lias, based upon his 2011 residency. Twelve composers from around the world spent time at the MSLC Field Camp to create wilderness-inspired pieces to be performed in Fairbanks as part of the festival. Events in the local community and park included performances of the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival String Orchestra at the Denali and Eielson Visitor Centers.



Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival Orchestra performing at Eielson Visitor Center

MAINTENANCE

The division's total funding for the fiscal year, including ONPS, quarters, reimbursable and project monies, totaled approximately \$13.6 million. During peak season the maintenance division work force of permanent, term and seasonal staff consisted of 128 employees. Volunteers contributed over 11,500 hours to the division's projects. These hours were provided by four SCA crews, forty volunteer groups, and multiple individuals.

Upgrades and Improvements to Trails and other Park Facilities

A major culvert replacement project funded through Federal Highways was executed this year. 150 culverts (all 45-50 years old) were replaced along the paved portion of the park road. One culvert crossing at Mile 5 of the Park road has some work to be completed in the spring of 2013. The section of Park Road traveling through Porcupine Forest received surface rehabilitation and sub grade stabilization. A new sand shelter was installed at the maintenance yard to enhance the Park's ability to respond to winter road conditions. The newly constructed front country waste water treatment facility was completed and received state and EPA permits to operate.

Trail crews completed the third phase of the Savage Alpine trail, which included building 1.5 miles of new trail, technical rock work, several re-routes and planning the final routing. Even though the trail is not complete, some portions are available to visitors. The trail will provide a significant hiking opportunity for park visitors when it is completed in 2013.

The trail crew also did a major rehabilitation on two miles of the Savage Canyon Loop trail, which included re-routing 1000 feet of the trail from the river edge. Over 100 volunteers, most of them local, came to assist with the trail work. The crew also rehabilitated the entire surface of the Horseshoe Lake trail, and installed 350 log checks to combat erosion.



Trail crew working on Savage Alpine Trail

Other Accomplishments

The School to Work program with the Denali Borough School District continued for the 12th straight year. This well-regarded and state-recognized program provides an extensive learning experience for high school students, who this year completed two high-quality cabins for the C-Camp seasonal housing area. The program has helped develop a local labor pool for the park, and has improved relationships between the NPS and the community. Students and three instructors (two NPS staff and one Tri-Valley School staff) camped in Kantishna for a week and constructed a building which will house fire management equipment.

Crews completed the rehabilitation of the potable water system rehabilitation the Teklanika River and Wonder Lake Campgrounds, which included the installation of new wells and the photovoltaic infrastructure to power the systems. Windows were replaced in the six-plex apartment building at park headquarters as an energy conservation measure and fire code deficiencies at the Auto Shop were remedied along with other safety and structural problems in the building. The roofs of four historic housing units in the park headquarters area were replaced with era-correct materials and one of the units received a complete rehabilitation to meet ADA guidelines for accessibility. Work on Toklat Auto Shop improvements began with the installation of an addition to the building.

Operational Highlights

Denali continues to increase its sustainability efforts. This year's activities included installing new photovoltaic systems at several locations and the purchase of three electric vehicles to move staff and materials around the frontcountry area. These vehicles are charged at new solar charging stations.

Staff also responded to major maintenance issues at facilities. A substantial roof leak at the Eielson Visitor Center was pinpointed and repaired by a contractor, and park maintenance staff dealt with frozen and subsequently damaged potable water lines at the Denali Visitor Center and Morino Grill. Locating all of the damage and repair took significant effort through much of the summer season. As a whole, the division completed 97% of the requested corrective maintenance work.

Personnel Changes

New Permanent and Term Employees

Rick Wise – Engineer – Returned to park

Riley Tingle – Roads Work Leader – Transfer from Olympic NP

Erik Adey – Auto Shop Administrative Assistant – New hire

Land Cole – Carpenter – New hire

Personnel in New Positions

Tom Wappel – Maintenance Mechanic

Bill Ellis - Utility Systems Repairer Operator (East District)

Jean Balay – Maintenance Mechanic

Eric Newton - Maintenance Mechanic

Jeff DeTiene – Special Projects Foreman

Departures

Steve Hockin – EEO – Retired

Monika Acton – Budget Analyst – Transfer to US Forest Service

Todd Shorey – Maintenance Mechanic – Left Govt Service

NATURAL RESOURCES – biological sciences

Bear Management

Between May 22 and September 12, 2012, 69 bear-human interactions were documented.

This marked a 46% increase from the previous year's total of 47. Of those interactions rated as encounters, 22 occurred in the frontcountry and 28 occurred in the backcountry. Of the 16 interactions classified as incidents this season, 11 occurred in the front country while the other 5 occurred in backcountry.

One of the backcountry incidents involved extensive injury to a person, resulting in the park's first bear-caused human fatality. A bear flushed from the area where the victim's remains was cached was shot the next day. Subsequent necropsy confirmed that it was the bear responsible for the individual's death.

Bear Movements Study

This study investigates the demographics and movements of grizzly bears and their offspring in the park. Six bears (two females and four males), including one male black bear, were captured in May. Three of the bears captured for the first time, including the black bear, and one recaptured bear were fitted with GPS radio collars. One very large newly captured male bear was fitted with a conventional VHF radio collars due to its size

Bears were radio tracked one to two times per month from May through September. No bears were located outside the park boundary on any flight. All GPS collars automatically released from the animals and were retrieved in September 2012. Finer resolution GPS data has been

downloaded from the collars. Analysis of these data will reveal movements by bears but an initial look shows that at least one bear travelled outside the park boundary.

Bird Monitoring

Two major accomplishments for the Denali bird program in 2012 include publishing results of the long-term Golden Eagle studies in major ornithological journals including:

- McIntyre, C.L., and J.H. Schmidt. 2012. Ecological and environmental correlates of territory occupancy and breeding performance of migratory Golden Eagles in interior Alaska. *Ibis* 154:124-135.
- McIntyre, C.L. 2-12. Quantifying sources of mortality and wintering ranges of Golden Eagles from interior Alaska using banding and satellite telemetry. *Journal of Raptor Research* 46: 128-133.

Several bird researchers including Dr. Carol McIntyre, wildlife biologist for Denali, observed a Swainson's Hawk near Sable Mountain on June 7. The species is considered rare in Alaska, and this observation represents the first documented record of this species in Denali in over 25 years.



Swainson's Hawk photographed in Denali

Botany: Four scientific journal articles describing significant work from this year were published:

Landscape-scale patterns in tree occupancy and abundance in subarctic Alaska

by Carl A. Roland, Joshua E. Schmidt, and E. Fleur Nicklen

Using a probabilistic sampling design, field measurements throughout the study area were collected to develop spatially-explicit Bayesian hierarchical models of tree occupancy and abundance. These models demonstrated a strong partitioning of the landscape among the six tree species in DNPP. Contrary to recent work in nearby areas of interior Alaska, results suggest that *P. glauca* distribution may actually increase in DNPP under warming conditions rather than declining as previously predicted, as *P. glauca* expands into areas formerly underlain by permafrost. There was no evidence found of a shift to broadleaf forests in DNPP, particularly in the poorly-drained basin landscape positions which may be resistant to such changes.

New and important vascular plant collections from south-central and southwestern Alaska: a region of floristic convergence by Matt L. Carlson, Robert Lipkin, Carl A. Roland, and Amy L. Miller

Between 2001 and 2005, botanists collected 815 taxa, of which approximately 600 were new records for one or more park units. These collections increase the total number of taxa documented for parks in the region to over 1000.

Patterns in the occupancy and abundance of the globally rare lichen Erioderma pedicellatum in Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska by Sarah E. Stehn, Peter R. Nelson, Carl A. Roland, and Jennifer R. Jones

Models predicting the occupancy of the globally rare and endangered epiphytic lichen, Erioderma pedicellatum, in a newly discovered (2009) population center in the park were created. These models for E. pedicellatum occupancy at the plot-scale identified study area, P. glauca density, deciduous basal area (Betula neoalaskana and Populus trichocarpa), and tall shrub cover (≥ 200 cm in height) as significant covariates. The new estimates of the DNPP population size increase the world population by at least tenfold to approximately 100,000 thalli.

A bryophyte species list for Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska, with comments on several new and noteworthy records by Sarah E. Stehn, James K. Walton, and Carl A. Roland

Botanists visited 39 inventory sites and 45 vegetation monitoring study areas within DNPP, increasing the number of bryophyte taxa previously known by 147. 499 taxa are reported in this updated flora (380 moss taxa in 134 genera and 119 liverwort taxa in 43 genera).

Caribou Monitoring

The Denali caribou herd continues to be the subject of intensive research by Dr. Layne Adams of the USGS-Alaska Science Center. In addition to population monitoring, the research centers on long-term trends in cow caribou survival and productivity, and more recently on survival and growth of bull caribou. The Denali herd currently numbers about 2,300 caribou and has been slowly increasing by about 2% per year over the last decade. The herd is the largest it has been since suffering a major decline during 1989-93 as a result of repeated severe winters.

Wolf Monitoring

In fall 2012 the population of wolves in Denali was surveyed at 57 individuals, the lowest levels yet recorded. Populations in the park have varied between 147 and 68 with an average of 97.6 between 1989-2011.

Since fall 2008, wolf densities have been in the low range of recorded densities with an apparent decreasing trend. From 2008 to 2012, early winter densities ranged from 3.1 to 5.2 wolves per square kilometers (54 to 90 wolves parkwide) and the last three years' wolf density (from 2010 to 2012) have been the lowest recorded since 1986. From 2009 to 2012, spring population estimates ranged from 3.5 to 3.9 wolves per square kilometers (60 to 68 wolves parkwide). No one obvious explanation is apparent, and there are likely a number of underlying and interrelated ecological factors resulting in the recent low density.

Wolf Viewing Study

This study, now in its third year, is expected to inform the NPS on the effect of wolf management practices outside park boundaries in terms of their impact on wolf populations and wolf viewing opportunities. Preliminary data shows a substantial decline in wolf viewing

opportunities over the past three years. In 2010 NPS researchers riding buses to the Eielson Visitor Center or beyond documented visitors seeing wolves on 45% of those trips. The following year, the researchers saw wolves on 21% of their bus trips. In 2012 wolves were seen on only 12% of the trips into the park.

There are many sources of variability in the chances of visitors seeing wolves on the park road, including den location, pack size, individual behavior, and pack social structure. Disturbance during denning is also an issue. All of these factors have not been fully analyzed, but the data has raised significant concerns. Additional data and peer review of the results are necessary to draw definitive conclusions.

Fire Management

Denali had only two fires, the Glacier Creek Fire (285 acres) and the East Fork Toklat (4 acres). The large Bear Creek Fire (8795 acres) was just north of the park boundary. Fire management worked closely with interagency partners and the Alaska Eastern Area Fire Management group, to assist with fuels reduction projects at multiple Alaska parks, and support large fire incidents in the lower 48 states. Staff members served in a variety of positions including firefighter Type 2, helicopter crewmembers and helicopter managers.



Debris from hazard fuel reduction project being burned at historic Parker Cabin

Assistant Fire Management Officer Charlie Reynar left Denali for a position at Rocky Mountain National Park. Keith Mitchell was hired to replace Charlie and officially started in July.

NATURAL RESOURCES - Physical and Social Sciences

Air Quality Monitoring

Airborne contaminants were monitored year-round for the 32nd year. The data capture rate was high, as was data quality, and all recommended quality assurance measures were followed according to network monitoring protocols. In the most recent ARD assessment of nationwide air quality conditions and trends, Denali results were positive. For all parameters (visibility, ozone, and deposition of sulfur and nitrogen compounds), conditions were rated in the “good” category.

In November 2012, the Alaska District Court approved a consent decree which will allow Golden Valley Electric Association (GVEA) to restart the coal-fired Healy Unit 2 power plant. The 50 megawatt plant has been in idle status since 1999, when it shut down immediately upon completion of post-construction demonstration and testing. The consent decree resolves outstanding regulatory issues and requires GVEA to install additional emission controls on Unit

2 in order to protect Denali's Class I airshed. It also mandates lower emission limits, and makes the adjacent Unit 1 coal-fired power plant subject to the 2011 federal mercury rule, which would otherwise only apply to Unit 2. GVEA is also required to fund an environmental mitigation project which covers the cost of exchanging residential wood stoves and coal stoves with cleaner, more efficient models in the Denali Borough and the Fairbanks North Star Borough. GVEA plans to restart Unit 2 by March 2015.

Climate Monitoring

Climate and snow monitoring continued in Denali as part of the Central Alaska Network Inventory and Monitoring Program. Data from the climate and snow stations were used to support other natural resource programs including caribou distribution and abundance, avian productivity, vegetation studies, stream surveys, as well as input for practical management issues such as construction projects, road work, and aviation safety. The CAKN climate and snow data are transmitted real time and available via the web for summaries, analyses, and downloading.

Climate highlights for Denali Park headquarters: The average annual temperature was 23.8° F, - 4.1°F cooler than the 1981-2010 normal. This was the 7th coldest year on record at park headquarters where daily weather observations have been recorded for 87 years. By far the coldest month was January 2012 - most of northern Alaska was under a persistent cold air mass in January and monthly temperatures throughout the region were well below normal. March, November and December were also notably colder than normal. February and April were more than 5 degrees F warmer than normal. The summer was cool with an average negative deviation of ~ 1 degree F. September temperatures were just above normal, and in October the temperatures dropped and remained cooler than normal for the rest of the year.

The annual precipitation total was 14.4 inches which is just below the normal of 15.1 inches. June was notably wetter than normal with 4.76 inches of rain, 221 % more than normal. This was followed by a dry July with a monthly total of only 0.78 inches, which is 24% of normal. The total snowfall at park headquarters for the 2011-2012 season (measured from July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012) was 69.5 inches, normal is 77.2 inches. December and January had the highest snowfall totals, with below average monthly snowfall totals for the early and late season.

Glacier Monitoring

This year's inventory shows almost all of Denali's glaciers have shrunk in size from the 1950s to ~2010, however the NPS lacks data to state equivocally if the rate of volume loss has increased. Mass balance and volume change data from a small sampling of glaciers indicate steady to increasing rates of volume loss since the 1950s, researchers suspect increasing rates of ice loss park-wide. Ongoing monitoring efforts are aimed at continuing to track changes in mass balance at index sites and determine rates of area and volume loss on select glaciers.

Long-term mass balance monitoring continued for the 22nd consecutive year on the Kahiltna and Traleika Glaciers. After two strongly negative years in 2010 and 2011, this year both sites had nearly neutral net balances. The Traleika index stake was accessed on foot for the first time in the history of the monitoring program. The six day, approximately 60 mile trip, involved crossing the McKinley River, following the old horse trail to McGonagall Pass, walking about 10 miles up the Traleika Glacier, and returning via the same route. The trip also combined retrieving and carrying out a soundscape station in nearby Carlson Creek with soundscape technician Davyd Betchkal.

The Middle Fork Toklat glacier was surveyed with a citizen science seminar in conjunction with the MSLC. Six participants helped complete a GPS survey of the terminus last done in 1992 and

of surface elevation of the lower glacier last done in 2002. This citizen science expedition is slated to repeat in August 2013.

New digital elevation models for the park were used to assess changes in ice volume for a portion of the Alaska Range. Ice loss and retreat was observed for most glaciers and signal for surge type glaciers was detected. The results of this pilot study were presented at the Geological Society of America's annual meeting.

Mile 45 Slump monitoring plan overhaul

The Mile 45 Slump is a rotational slump (landslide) located immediately below the park road near mile 45. Because the slump is actively eroding towards the road and is currently within 4 meters of the road shoulder edge, it poses an immediate risk to traffic. Surveys of the slump have been conducted on a roughly annual basis since 1993 using traditional surveying methods in a local coordinate system (i.e. the data is not geographically referenced.) In 2011 we began updating the monitoring plan for the slump which culminated in fall of 2012. The survey is now conducted with a survey-grade GPS. The transition has facilitated a shift to a semi-automated, GIS-based approach to monitoring and analyzing slump movements that was developed by a park volunteer. In 2012, the existing wooden lathe survey stakes were replaced by aluminum-capped rebar monuments and additional monuments were installed to reduce gaps in the monitoring grid. The new monuments are more stable through time, are less visible to visitors, can be measured more accurately, and can also be found easily with GPS and metal-detectors. The surveys will continue to inform Roads staff so that appropriate decisions regarding the slump can be implemented on a timely basis.

Paleontological resource data compilation

The multi-year Paleontological Resources Inventory Project determined the location, condition, and significance of 21 new fossil resources within the Late Cretaceous Cantwell formation of the park. At the close of the field season, 213 fossil localities containing 420 distinct specimens have been documented.



Recently fallen leaf on the left pictured with leaf fossil on the right

Additional information on photo: It was taken while conducting an Abandoned Mineral Lands inventory at the Dunkle Mine in the Costello Creek drainage. The modern leaf on the left is likely a balsam poplar and the similar leaf fossil on the right is from the Usibelli Group of Formations which are mostly Miocene in age (5 - 23 million years old). Other fossils can be seen in the rocks surrounding these leaves. This same group of formations is where the Usibelli coal comes from and similar fossils can be collected near the old Suntrana Mine outside the park.

A collaborative project between Dr. Robert Blodgett and Denali conducted a detailed paleontological inventory of the fossil resources of the park, which entailed a compilation of all available paleontological data. This compilation included a paleontological bibliography, digital copies of literature, a listing of paleontological localities, and maps showing the location of each of these samples. Excel spreadsheets were prepared showing the locality description, geographic coordinates, and a complete listing of fossil fauna and flora. This compilation will be an invaluable asset to the new generation of paleontologists and geologists interested in working with Denali resources, as well as informing current and future paleontological resource management issues for the park.

Road Ecology and Vehicle Management Plan

The Denali Park Road Final Vehicle Management Plan (VMP) identifies indicators and associated standards to help managers assess traffic levels on the Denali Park Road that were previously monitored as part of the development of the VMP and EIS, but 2012 is the first year of monitoring post release of the final VMP.

In summer 2012, park staff continued to collect sheep behavior observational data along the park road, GPS data on vehicle movements, and numbers of vehicles at rest stops, wildlife stops, and in viewscapes. Vehicle GPS systems were installed in all busses and many NPS vehicles. Bus drivers were required to enter wildlife sighting information into touch screen panels which will enhance long-term monitoring of wildlife populations along the road. A 2011 - 2012 summary report presents data on four of the seven tier one indicators of the VMP: number of vehicles at wildlife stops, number of vehicles at rest stops, number of vehicles at viewscapes, and the presence of ten minute gaps in traffic at sheep gap locations.

- The number of vehicles at wildlife stops were in compliance with the VMP with the exception of Subzone 3 (Eielson Visitor Center to Wonder Lake) in 2012.
- The number of vehicles at indicator rest stops were within VMP guidelines.
- The number of vehicles at certain indicator viewscapes were occasionally above VMP standards.
- Sheep gap observations did not meet VMP standards for the percentage of hours with ten minute traffic gaps.

The viewscapes and wildlife stops out of compliance in 2012 had relatively small sample sizes compared to the compliant sites; increasing the number of observations collected may increase data accuracy. Likewise, GPS units installed in park buses and vehicles in 2012 allow access to continuous traffic data and should increase the accuracy of future indicator monitoring.

Toklat River Dynamics and Gravel Acquisition

The Denali Gravel Acquisition Plan authorizes gravel to be removed from the Toklat River floodplain to support maintenance needs of the Denali Park Road. Beginning in 2004, approximately 22,000 cubic yards of gravel were extracted from the river biyearly by a “mirror channel” method whereby channels mirroring existing braids were excavated. The method

allows for minimum impact on the river system because it mimics natural river processes and form while providing a long-term sustainable gravel yield. Harvesting gravel locally minimizes traffic on the park road, use of fossil fuels, and the potential for invasive plants from external gravel sources. In 2012 the park completed a comprehensive analysis of the Toklat River system, which assessed cumulative impacts from bank reinforcement along the road system, the existing bridges and causeway, and gravel extraction. Additionally an annual re-survey of long-term cross sections used to monitor river dynamics was completed. One important conclusion of the comprehensive analysis is that both the infrastructure in the floodplain and gravel extraction activities are likely influencing channel pattern and river behavior. Alternatives are currently being explored to return the river to a more natural state, while continuing to provide gravel for the road and adequate land for necessary facilities.



2012 Toklat “scrape”, i.e. gravel removal operation

Social Science

The 2011 Visitor Services Project, a cooperative effort with the University of Idaho, was published and presented to management in early 2012. The main area of research was the soundscape social norm cooperative study in support of the backcountry management indicators and standards. The 2012 survey design utilized a series of ‘listening sessions’ which provided controlled sound doses to participants contacted while hiking on trails in the park and recorded their responses using tablet pc technology. Denali is one of the first parks to utilize this new technology, and it is hoped that results can be used to further refine backcountry standards related to human-caused noise.

Staff from the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute and the park are collaborating to produce a wilderness character map for Denali. Several dozen custom wilderness character metrics are being tabulated, mapped and summarized. This is the first comprehensive inventory and analysis of wilderness resources for Denali, the third park to receive this product.

The social science program worked on developing new internal tools for digitally recording visitor use data. One example is a new digital flight data collection form used to gather commercial air operator flight and visitor use information. The social scientist also designed a 2012 study and oversaw data collection associated with hiker encounter rates on the Triple Lakes

Trail. This information can be used to monitor future guided hike number stipulations and to determine compliance with existing backcountry plan hiker standards.

Soundscapes

This was the 7th year of the park's comprehensive acoustic inventory. To date, 46 out of 60 sites have been monitored. Most sites demonstrate aircraft noise exceeds standards established in the Backcountry Management Plan. This was the first year a North Side Best Aviation Practice was recommended by the Overflights Advisory Committee. A slight improvement in the northside zone associated with these recommendations was observed.

PLANNING

2012 year marked the completion of the four year planning process for the Vehicle Management Plan. This effort will help to inform the next 10-20 years of managing and operating the transportation system in the park.

Due to interest in increased winter visitation opportunities, the park began the planning process to consider plowing the park road to the Mountain Vista Rest Area (Mile 12) during the winter months to provide additional recreational opportunities for winter visitors. The initial scoping for the took place in late February – early March. The draft alternatives were being developed and undergoing internal review throughout 2012. The draft alternatives were scheduled to be released for public comment in early 2013.



View of Mt. McKinley from Mountain Vista Rest Area

RESOURCE AND VISITOR PROTECTION (RANGERS)

North District

Personnel

There were some substantial changes in staffing. Jessica Korhut, from Bighorn National Monument, Wyoming, arrived in December 2012 as the newest patrol ranger. Jaime Smith went to Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area for a promotion as the land incursion specialist, and her husband, Backcountry Ranger Matt Smith, also left for a position there. Trooper Snow received a promotion to shift supervisor when he accepted a position at Independence National

Historical Park in Philadelphia. North District Ranger Richard Moore went to Isle Royale National Park, Michigan to become their Chief Ranger. Sharon Olson moved from Toklat into the headquarters-based position vacated by Snow. Selections are being finalized to fill other vacant positions.

Significant incidents

On August 24 the first known fatal bear attack in the park occurred along the Toklat River. The incident was discovered by an off duty park ranger hiking with family members just hours after the attack. The attack involved a solo backpacker, which investigation revealed had come upon and remained in close proximity to the bear for several minutes before it attacked. Many divisions within the park worked closely together to respond to the incident and the subsequent investigation. Alaska State Troopers provided invaluable assistance as well. A large male bear was killed at the scene the day after the attack. A necropsy confirmed that it was the bear that attacked the hiker.

In August Denali rangers and the Alaska Special Event and Tactical Team (SETT) conducted a joint operation in the southwest Preserve to address sheep hunting issues. Many positive contacts were made with hunting parties, and only a few minor violations were noted. In October rangers served nine search warrants in Anchorage related to an illegal moose hunting case near Kantishna, in a joint operation with Alaska State Troopers, Fish and Wild life agents, other NPS rangers and special agents, and Bureau of Land Management agents. A total of 24 law enforcement personnel were involved, some coming from as far away as Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Yosemite National Park, and Yellowstone National Park.

Rangers pulled over 500 case numbers for reportable incidents which included five lost overdue persons, 23 motor vehicle accidents and 43 emergency medical calls. In addition rangers responded to two aviation mishaps, one in the park and another just outside the boundary.

Road Lottery

The park received 9,864 entries, a decrease from last year. The majority of the entries, 81%, were done online, and the call center processed 971 or 10 % of the entries. The remainder of the applicants sent in entries via mail.

Road lottery went smoothly given the fickle weather, which kept rangers and other park staff busy while working the popular annual event. Very high winds on Sunday (sustained 60 mph) knocked over the porta-potties at Polychrome and made it difficult for some visitors with motorhomes to travel through the area. Falling rocks at Eielson Bluffs and east of Polychrome broke windows on six vehicles. Scattered snow storms Sunday night left an accumulation of ice and snow on the higher parts of the road, which delayed road opening on Monday until mid-morning when the sun had melted the ice.

South District

Personnel

The South District bid farewell to Law Enforcement Ranger Matt Hendrickson in June and welcomed back mountaineering ranger Brandon Latham as a commissioned graduate of FLETC. Longtime seasonal mountaineering ranger Tucker Chenoweth accepted the permanent mountaineering ranger position vacated by Hendrickson. Former visitor use assistant Julia Crocetto dusted off her uniform and returned to seasonal service after a five year hiatus, much to everyone's delight.

Mountain Operations

This year was the first of the new increased climbing fees, which will make the mountain operations more self-sufficient, with costs aligned to the cost recovery nature of the fees.

This season, Basecamp equipment was ably inserted by a team of US Army Blackhawk (UH-60) helicopters, as the usual Chinook (CH-47) crews were deployed elsewhere. Talkeetna rangers worked hand in hand with a team from A (Alpha) Company 1-52 Aviation Regiment based in Anchorage to haul camp infrastructure and supplies, both at the onset of the season and again during the wrap-up in July. Mountaineering staff led eight patrols on Denali's West Buttress, six patrols in other parts of the Alaska Range, including the Ruth Gorge, Mount Hunter, and Mount Dan Beard, and two patrols to Backside Lake to help monitor new commercial usage in that area. Based on feedback provided during last year's fee increase scoping meetings, Basecamp ranger presence was reduced to just five patrols at the 7,200-foot camp, focusing resources on the busy mid-season period, from May 18 to June 29.

A total of 45 mountaineering VIPs, including an unprecedented 17 returnees, contributed almost 12,000 hours to the mountaineering program. Denali's high altitude medical program is indebted to two exceptionally dedicated volunteers, Dr. Jennifer Dow and paramedic Paul Marcolini, whose combined services include ranger EMT training, medical oversight, on-mountain care, and on-call phone consultations.

Major Search and Rescue Summary

The rescue season was another busy one, with 17 major incidents ranging from injured knees and ankles; to altitude-related illnesses such as HAPE and HACE; as well as multiple avalanches. Heavier than average snowfall resulted in an avalanche on Motorcycle Hill that claimed the lives of four Japanese teammates. One teammate survived the ordeal. In addition to those four fatalities, two other mountaineers died in unrelated falls on the West Buttress and on the Orient Express. South District staff also assisted Alaska's Rescue Coordination Center (RCC) by responding to three aircraft-related mishaps located in the Talkeetna Mountains, the southwest Preserve, and near Broad Pass.



Probe line searching avalanche debris for clues to location of four Japanese climbers – June 16

Helicopter Operations

2012 was below average for helicopter SAR operations, which was a positive change from the previous year's busy high altitude rescue season. While this year's number of fatalities on the mountain is above average, they all occurred in known locations and there were no major searches that required extensive flight time. The only short-haul operation of the season was done to rescue the final group on the mountain on July 26. Pilot Andy Hermansky used the coast guard rescue basket to retrieve two of the climbers via short-haul. One more was rescued by landing and loading with ranger Tucker Chenoweth from the 17,200-foot camp.

Intra-agency Assistance

2012 was a big year for assisting other NPS units in times of need. Six South District rangers, as well as the Denali-contracted A-Star B3 helicopter pilot and mechanic, assisted Mt. Rainier National Park staff in various capacities after the tragic death of Mount Ranger NP (MORA) ranger Nick Hall in June. South District Ranger John Leonard was requested to serve on the Serious Accident Investigation Team (SAIT) related to the work-related fatality, and helicopter manager Joe Reichert worked with the A-Star crew to assist MORA operations, conduct helicopter safety training, and re-look at MORA aviation protocols. Other Denali mountaineering rangers that assisted at MORA in the aftermath of the accident included Mark Westman, Kevin Wright, Matt Hendrickson, and Chris Erickson.

Additionally, Joe Reichert did a detail assignment with the backcountry rangers at North Cascades National Park; John Leonard served on another Serious Accident Investigation team related to an employee accident at Lake Mead NRA; Brandon Latham stepped in as a Division Supervisor during the Hurricane Sandy clean-up efforts at Ellis Island/Statue of Liberty; and Maureen McLaughlin assisted the Alaska Region as a field trainer for the NPS-wide FBMS financial software conversion. Mountaineering rangers were on standby for a deployment to Afghanistan to assist with recovery efforts following a massive avalanche claiming over 100 military victims. The deployment was eventually stood down.

Backcountry Management

This year marked the kickoff of full cross-division staffing to fully implement the 2006 Backcountry Management Plan. Rob Burrows was hired in January as a Physical Scientist to conduct and coordinate monitoring of the plan's indicators and to develop adaptive management strategies for refining indicator implementation and standards. Rob was the acting Wilderness Coordinator until Dan Abbe was hired in August as the Backcountry District Ranger and Wilderness Coordinator.

Backcountry Information Center Operations and Patrols

Rangers working out of the Backcountry Information Center assisted 6,922 visitors at the BIC from May 15- September 18 and issued 1,686 permits. Additionally, backcountry rangers patrolled 1,032 miles of Denali Wilderness mostly on foot (and about 30 miles in packrafts). Field observations done during these patrols included documentation of thirty historic and prehistoric sites. Backcountry staff also provided assistance to field researchers, supported glacier monitoring efforts, installed, maintained and removed three remote backcountry sound-monitoring stations, and recorded more than 1,000 overflights.

Backcountry Indicator Monitoring

A major effort this year was creating a wilderness character spatial model. Peter Landres and James Tricker of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute conducted a workshop in March with an inter-divisional team. The map/model and report are slated for completion in early 2013.

Alonzo Mandanna and Sarah Hayes were hired as seasonal Backcountry Rangers to do backcountry indicator monitoring, primarily informal (social) trail monitoring. Britta Schroeder was hired as a seasonal physical science technician to create a database of all park administrative aircraft use. The spatial database captures flight tracks of most use but further efforts in 2013 will hopefully yield a comprehensive picture.

Alaska Region Communications Center (ARCC)

The ARCC saw expanded regional use, providing flight following and resource tracking services to the majority of national parks in Alaska. The center followed nearly 7,000 flight hours, took 29,000 calls, and dispatched 3,741 calls for service. ARCC staff assisted in orchestrating search and rescue, medical evacuation, or significant incident responses in Gates of the Arctic, Yukon-Charley Preserve, Glacier Bay NP, Wrangell-St. Elias NP, Katmai, and Denali. ARCC continues to work closely with the Regional Coordination Center, Alaska State Troopers, BLM, USCG and various municipal, national, and state agencies.

The ARCC's expansion is the focus of an ALC Strategic Workgroup that hopes to determine a strategic plan for regional use over the next five years. Input from all users is being incorporated in our continuing effort to serve the region as consistently, professionally & safely as possible.

With the addition of Ryan Crews, Shaun Lowery, and Brian Napier to the staff, all of the positions were filled for the first time in the two years since the creation of the ARCC. After more than four years of service at the ARCC, Supervisor Lynn McAloon resigned in December 2012 to pursue other opportunities.

Aviation Program flight hour statistics

309.9 hours - FY12

380.1 hours - FY11

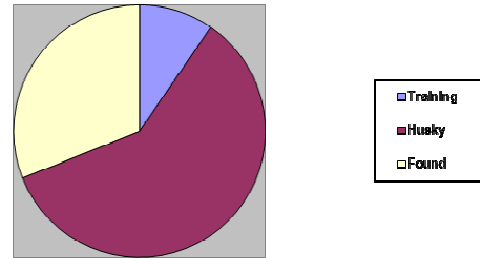
324.7 hours - FY10

366.7 hours - FY09

281.2 hours - FY08

267.5 hours - FY07

180.0 hours - FY06



SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE

Dignitary visits

This was the year of the Russians, as the park hosted three groups of protected area managers, some associated with the Beringia program, in September. The first group was able to experience the park while summer facilities and services were still in operation, but the latter two arrived after the road lottery, when most park facilities were closed for the season. The weather held, and the NPS was able to charter a tour bus and driver from the park concessioner to get the final set of 18 participants into the park as far as the Stony Overlook. This group consisted of their highest level protected area managers, including the head of their national park and preserve system. The Regional Office reported that all were very impressed with Denali, and that they hope to return in 2013 with additional staff.

Other visitors included Appropriations Committee staff and eight chiefs of staff for Senators, including David Ramseur, Chief of Staff for Alaska Senator Mark Begich. The park also hosted the May quarterly meeting of the Alaska Leadership Council (Regional Directorate and Alaska

park superintendents), the annual board meeting for the National Parks and Conservation Association (four days in June), the Transportation Review board (June), and a day field trip for approximately 12 young leaders in the Institute of the North organization (July).

Retirement of Longest Serving Superintendent

Superintendent Paul Anderson hung up his flat hat for the final time on September 30, after 42 years of service, including eleven as Denali Superintendent. He was feted with a dinner at the MSLC dining facility on September 22 that was attended by nearly 100 park employees, park partners, NPS retirees, and community members. Regional Director Sue Masica capped off the evening by presenting Paul with the Department of the Interior Honor Award for Superior Service.



Sue Masica presenting Paul Anderson with DOI honor award

Paul and his wife Wendy will divide their time between their homes in Homer, Alaska and Tucson, Arizona.

Park featured in two NBC broadcasts:

In June, NBC Today Show contributing correspondent Jenna Bush Hager took in the spectacular sights of Denali National Park, visited the sled dogs, and spent time at basecamp as part of a week-long special series on her experiences in national parks. The crew also filmed her on a short walk with Superintendent Anderson, but that didn't make it in the piece that aired during the first week of July. The video is posted at: <http://video.today.msnbc.msn.com/today/48042067>

Channel 2 (KTUU), the NBC affiliate in Anchorage and the largest media outlet in Alaska, approached the park early in the year about the possibility of doing a special evening documentary on Denali and the significant issues the park is grappling with. The project included getting pre-taped footage and doing a live broadcast from the park. The Public Affairs Officer provided background material, arranged multiple interviews with park staff, and facilitated several days of filming (and scouting for a live broadcast location) at the park prior to the live broadcast. This special edition of the "49th report" aired on July 18, and was broadcast live from the Eielson Visitor Center, the first time that the satellite truck had traveled that far into

the park. Planning Chief Miriam Valentine and Denali Borough Mayor Dave Talerico were interviewed at the visitor center, and Superintendent Anderson was interviewed from the station's headquarters in Anchorage, as he was in town for meetings.



Channel 2 satellite truck in Eielson VC parking lot

CONCLUSION

The park continued to successfully meet its short and long term goals in 2012, in spite of the loss of valuable employees. The dedication and skills of the Denali employees remaining will continue to be tested, as the park girds itself for new challenges in the coming years.