

# STATE OF ALASKA

## CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION ON FEDERAL AREAS

**SARAH PALIN,**  
*Governor*

3700 AIRPORT WAY  
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA  
99709

PHONE: (907) 374-3737  
FAX: (907) 451-2751

February 13, 2009

Meg Jensen, Superintendent  
Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve  
P.O. Box 439  
Copper Center, Alaska 99573

Re: Subsistence Firewood Plan

Dear Ms. Jensen:

As a follow-up to our last meeting, the Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas would like to offer some comments on the planning process now underway for subsistence firewood use within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve.

First and most importantly, the Commission would strongly encourage you to not implement a permit system for subsistence harvest of firewood. Resident zone communities for park units were established to avoid a permit system for hunting and fishing activities. This system has worked well over the years for subsistence hunting and fishing and only in limited circumstances have permits been required in addition to other regulatory controls.

While we appreciate that there may be management concerns, we believe that alternatives to a permit system are preferable. Voluntary measures should be considered as a first step. For example, residents could be asked to report the amount and location of firewood harvested. If there are specific resource concerns in a portion of the park, areas could be designated for firewood harvest and subsistence users asked to cut in those areas. A permit implies the granting of a privilege rather than the recognition of a right guaranteed under ANILCA. A permit system should be considered only as a last resort and only after other measures have proven ineffective.

Another issue related to subsistence use of timber and firewood also should be addressed as part of this process. Recent revisions to the 36 CFR Part 13 regulations have placed additional restrictions of timber harvest and also appear to have created an inconsistency between §13.485(a)(1) and §13.485(b).

By changing the term “live standing timber” to “standing timber” the result is that a permit will be required to harvest any standing timber greater than 3 inches in diameter, where previously a permit was required only to cut live timber greater than 3 inches.

The problem is further complicated by language in §13.485(b) that allows the harvest of “dead or downed timber for firewood” without a permit. Given the proliferation of beetle-killed timber in the Copper River Basin, much of the available dead timber is standing. Because of the removal of the qualifying term “live standing,” we now have a situation where one section of the regulations requires a permit to cut any tree greater than 3 inches, but a second section under the same tree could be cut without a permit.

Of course, this discrepancy would affect timber harvest in all Alaskan park units where subsistence activities are permitted, not just Wrangell- St. Elias. We suggest that additional revisions be made to correct or clarify this discrepancy.

The Commission appreciates the opportunity to comment on this issue. We hope that you find our suggestions helpful as you complete the planning process on this issue. We look forward to reviewing the completed environmental assessment and plan. Please keep us informed about any regulation changes or revisions.

Sincerely,



Rick Schikora  
Chairman

Cc: Sally Gibert- State ANILCA Coordinator