

# STATE OF ALASKA

TONY KNOWLES, GOVERNOR

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April 26, 2002

Robert L. Arnberger  
Regional Director  
National Park Service  
2525 Gambell Street, Room 107  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Mr. Arnberger:

I am writing to alert you to a significant breakdown in what has otherwise been a highly productive dialogue between the National Park Service and the State of Alaska about use of national park compendia in Alaska park units. At issue is the Superintendent's action to finalize, sign, and distribute the 2002 Katmai compendium<sup>1</sup> without further notice to or consultation with, the State of Alaska, -- despite February 26, 2002, assurances from park and regional office staff that such consultation would occur prior to the 2002 summer season.

To briefly recap, we met with regional office staff and park superintendents to discuss our extensive comments on general compendia issues on December 6, 2001. We also provided a detailed review of the 2001 Katmai compendium. Our letter led to several additional discussions between the Service and the state, including a session focusing on compendium issues with senior enforcement staff from all Alaska park units on December 19, 2001, and additional follow up sessions on February 26-27, 2002, regarding the compendia for Katmai and Wrangell-St. Elias park units. As you know, the February 26-27 dialogue was particularly useful for both the state and Service, and considerable progress was made toward resolving a range of issues. For both of these evolving documents, we were assured of additional opportunities for follow-up dialogue after park staff had a chance to rethink some of the issues, and prior to implementation for the 2002 season.

Since the February meeting, the Wrangell-St. Elias Assistant Superintendent provided a revised draft compendium at the end of March, which we are currently evaluating. Then, on about April 12, we heard second-hand from the public that the Katmai compendium had been signed on April 1. This was confirmed when I met the Katmai Superintendent for a scheduled informal

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<sup>1</sup> This compendium covers Katmai National Park and Preserve, Aniakchak National Monument, and the Alagnak Wild River corridor.

coordination meeting on April 15. Later that day I also received a copy of the signed Katmai compendium in the mail from the Regional Office with an April 9 cover letter. Needless to say, those of us closely tracking compendia issues were surprised and deeply disappointed that the expected follow-up dialogue had not taken place.

We understand that park compendia are fluid documents, designed to be modified as conditions and understandings change, and that additional revisions are anticipated as the Service and state work through our current issues. We also understand that at some point the compendium must be finalized for the summer season so that visitors and commercial service providers know the "rules of the road." The Superintendent assured me that, even though the compendium had been signed for the 2002 season, opportunities for longer term dialogue had not been terminated. However, we discussed in February a number of significant issues which impact our agencies as well as the public which we had hoped we could resolve before the final 2002 compendium was issued.

Among the remaining issues, which range from minor to very significant, we were particularly interested in additional pre-season dialogue about the so-called "50/100 yard rule" for bear viewing. The process that you and Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commissioner Frank Rue wisely initiated in September 2001 to address bear viewing concerns has resulted in development of some draft guidelines that are under review by Service staff and other agencies. We anticipated this effort moving more quickly to produce an alternative approach; but for some reason, dialogue seems to have stalled. Recognizing this situation, we were prepared to discuss interim steps for this season, such as narrowing the sweeping applicability of the current rule to selected locations (e.g., Brooks Camp and specific sites on the Katmai coast) while the rule undergoes continued review.

The State of Alaska is committed to working cooperatively with the Service on compendium issues. In light of the unexpected release of the 2002 Katmai compendium, we seek your assurance that a predictable process will be established to promote continued constructive compendium dialogue in the future.

Sincerely,

/ss/

Sally Gibert  
State CSU Coordinator

cc: Deborah O. Liggett, Superintendent, Katmai, Lake Clark, Aniakchak and Alagnak units  
Gary Candelaria, Superintendent, Wrangell-St. Elias NP&Pr  
Jay Liggett, Chief Ranger, Regional Office  
Frank Rue, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game