

# STATE OF ALASKA

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April 15, 1991

Mr. Boyd Evison  
Regional Director  
National Park Service  
2525 Gambell St., Suite 107  
Anchorage, AK 99503

Dear Mr. Evison:

The State of Alaska has reviewed the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for a Talkeetna Visitor Center to serve the Denali National Park and Preserve. This letter represents the consolidated comments of State resource agencies.

The State is generally pleased to see that the National Park Service (NPS) is working with Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI) on another alternative to address increasing visitor demand for facilities on the southside of Denali National Park and Preserve. We look forward to review of the more comprehensive environmental impact statement scheduled for release next year. At this time the State has relatively few comments to convey since this proposal is in its early stages.

#### Projected Traffic Increases and Impacts

It is reasonable to assume that a major visitor center located in Talkeetna will generate increases in vehicular traffic along the Talkeetna Spur Road as well as increased use of the airport for access and flightseeing. Subsequent analyses should include projections of these increases and address what improvements to the Talkeetna Spur Road and Talkeetna Airport may be needed in the future. The NPS should coordinate future transportation analyses with Roger Maggard, Central Region Planning, Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, at 266-1653.

Page 11, paragraph 6 indicates that a transit system will be needed to transport visitors to the center from the railroad station and the proposed hotel complex. It is not clear whether the cost to

Boyd Evison  
National Park Service  
Draft Environmental Assessment  
Talkeetna Visitor Center

(2)

April 15, 1991

initiate and operate this system will be a component of the visitor center, the hotel, or if the town of Talkeetna, the NPS, or another entity will be responsible. This issue should be more fully addressed in subsequent planning documents.

### Water Quality

The availability of adequate water supplies and the treatment of wastewater must be addressed in more detail. The EA indicates on page 12 that the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation believes that the Talkeetna sewage lagoons northeast of town could result in contamination of the aquifer. This issue should be clearly researched and addressed in further planning documents.

### E.A. Form and Content

Detailed site descriptions are needed at the start of the EA. Good information about the sites is contained in the Desirability Analysis contained on pages 10 and 11. However, a more detailed description of the location of the alternate parcels should be provided in the beginning of the EA rather than in the conclusion. For example, the first reference to the distance of the CIRI site from the highway is located on page 11, paragraph 3, an important piece of information in light of possible road impacts noted above.

The EA needs an introductory section which describes the planning process, the need for the EA, and the overall goals of the proposal. The current "Introduction", while valuable, is really a summary of a public meeting held in Talkeetna. It would be more appropriate to include this summary elsewhere in a section addressing "Public Participation".

It would also be helpful to add a conclusions section to the alternatives analysis which clearly indicates that there are no alternative sites because, for example, the land is owned by CIRI and not available for development or that the land does not meet the selection criteria because of viewsheds.

In subsequent documents, the maps should be improved for easier reading. It was very difficult to determine where the various parcels are located in relation to the road system and the community of Talkeetna.

Finally, we suggest that the upcoming EIS include a matrix

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Boyd Evison  
National Park Service  
Draft Environmental Assessment  
Talkeetna Visitor Center

(2)

April 15, 1991

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Boyd Evison  
National Park Service  
Draft Environmental Assessment  
Talkeetna Visitor Center

(3)

April 15, 1991

comparison of the southside alternatives that summarizes major attributes of each site in light of decision-making criteria.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments. The State will likely have more comprehensive comments when this proposal is reviewed in the context of the upcoming EIS concerning southside development. If you have any questions, please call me at 465-3562 or Sally Gibert at 561-6133.

Sincerely,



Paul C. Rusanowski, Ph.D.  
Director

cc: Mr. Russell Berry, Superintendent, Denali National Park and Preserve  
Mr. Harold Heinze, Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources  
Mr. John Sandor, Commissioner, Department of Environmental Conservation  
Mr. Carl Rosier, Commissioner, Department of Fish and Game  
Mr. Frank Turpin, Commissioner, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

**TALKEETNA VISITOR CENTER EA**  
**April 16, 1991**  
**DISTRIBUTION LIST**

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