

# DNR - Mining, Land & Water Online Public Comment

## Denali State Park Trail Management Plan

Home <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/plans/denali/denalitrail.htm>

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Scott Hala  
Alaska Outdoor Access Alliance  
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Added to contact list: Yes. My preferred method of contact is *Mail*.

### Topic: General Comments

Submitted 12/15/2009 at 10:25 PM:

Memorandum for record:

To: Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation

From: Alaska Outdoor Access Alliance (AOAA) P.O. Box 4053 Palmer, Alaska 99652

Subject: Denali State Park Trail Management Plan

The members of AOAA would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the trail management plan and would like to take this opportunity to request the creation of limited motorized access within the park during hunting season. We would like to see the use of low ground pressure vehicles authorized within the park boundary west of the parks highway to alleviate over crowding on general state lands and improve access for disabled Americans. The creation or extension of existing trails with vehicles with low ground pressure would afford a net gain of greater access to game resources within the park to accommodate an increasing state Off Highway Vehicle, (OHV) use and population. It is imperative that any management plans meet the added demands of our growing population. A suggested vehicle designation of motorized vehicles designed or adapted for cross-country operation over irregular terrain, consisting of more than one drive wheel or track and exerting less than 10 pounds per square inch ground pressure. The use of OHVs for the utility of gathering game resources would be restricted to designated trails establish for such use. If you have any questions concerning our recommendation, please contact us at the above address.

Sincerely,

AOAA President

Dan Elliott scoping comments (notes taken by Claire LeClair during phone conversation with Dan)  
12/15/09

Dan's contact info: 376-5196  
950 East Fairview Loop Road  
Wasilla, Alaska 99654

Background: Has a cabin Lane Cr. east of the Susitna River and just outside the SE corner of the park since 1969. Accesses it from the RR.

Chair of the State Park Adv board when Dale Bingham was superintendent. When he was involved with the adv board, they were already condensed (from Upper Susitna to MatSu/Copper Basin).

Judith Anderegg was chair before Dan.

Dan is the current chair of the MatSu Borough Parks, Recreation and Trails Advisory Council. (Ask Linda Brenner about a resolution by the borough parks advisory council about moving of the visitor center.)

1. Main point and concern on the trail plan (assuming visitor center goes up there) is that the access road will be used as a corridor for motorized vehicles. Recommends that snow machines only go as far as the transportation hub. Development of the VC will make it easier to get to Curry and Kesugi Ridges. We are losing everywhere in AK to motorized use. Peace and quiet are natural resource values that affect both people and animals and are necessary to many forms of outdoor recreation

When involved with advisory board, got a lot of groups, agencies and others together concerning the Petersville Road and Tokositna area. Suggestion was to have corridors that snow machines would stay in, so there were some places for critters and others to go to get away from, but there was no compromise from the snow machine folks.

South Denali development will allow for easier access. Winds are strong, so not that great a place to ride anyway.

Suggests allowing snow machines to go from Sherman or Gold Cr. up to the west through a saddle and to the Parks Highway. However, prefers to see no snow machines in the alpine area, but this would work if there needs to be a compromise.

2. If VC goes in, suggest that a trail go from the visitor center to Blair Lake and that it should follow east side of drainage from 1787. From Blair Lake very questionable that you could get to Princess Lodge. But at some point, Princess will want their people to have extended hikes. Also, may want to allow folks the opportunity to drive up to visitor center and then walk downhill to Princess Hotel. Probably have a shuttle bus at some point to go up there.

Boy Scouts will need a trail that only they use for their summer camp season. Make it east of the visitor center trails. Need a lot of planning and management on this.

There should be a hiking trail to the Curry Lookout from Curry. Reasonable to include it as a future possibility. Work with the RR to do this.

There was only snow machine use on Curry Ridge after Stratton tried to close it. Dan up there the year before and there were no tracks to the lookout. Too steep without a route through the alders. Advisory Board commented on Princess permit: hope to not restrict access to Blair Lake and not to use helicopters.

3. Emphasize the Tokositna area should have snow machine corridors. More important to work on Curry Ridge, Tokositna is too hard to change the current use patterns. Ideally you could have corridors in Petersville area, but does not think it is possible to keep them on the corridors. So, really best to restrict them in one area and that area would be the Curry/Kesugi ridge area.

Dan uses snow machines so is not against them, but there have to be some restrictions. Only way to manage is to have some areas where they are restricted.

Point: BLM land along Denali highway has restrictions on motorized use (e.g., of Landmark Gap trails, Haggart Trail, others), why not State parks? These areas are still open to public use, just not for use with all the accoutrements.

Received  
12-15-09

# Questionnaire for Denali State Park Trail Management Plan

1. What are the most important issues to address and resolve in the Trail Management Plan for Denali State Park?

Narrow the planning process to actual trail planning! Stop trying to initiate conflict that does not exist or encourage conflicts that may exist. This first step in "planning" has had the results of stepping in a big pile of stink or more likened to throwing gasoline on a smoldering fire. From the very beginning the South Denali planning process has set the stage to close areas to snowmobiling, especially at and around the proposed visitor center, and this latest "trail planning" is another attempt to gather ammunition for the State and National Park managers to do just that.

This is a great opportunity to do something positive for Alaskans as well as all visitors to the park and the negative implications of "resolving potential conflicts between different trail users" should be removed from the discussion. I know from experience, specifically winter trail development in the south denali area, that trails CAN bring people with different views and life styles together and don't need to divide. Park management should look for examples of cooperation and not segregation.

2. How often do you use trails in Denali State Park?

In the summer 1-4 times a month.

In the summer 1-4 times a week

3. Which of the existing trails listed below do you use and for what purpose (for example: exercise, hunting, berry picking, photography, adventure, nature observation, family activity)?

Byers Lake Loop

Byers Lake  
Activities:

All of the above

Little Coal Creek to Kesugi Ridge

Little Coal  
Activities:

All of the above

Ermine Hill Trail

Ermine Hill  
Activities:

All of the above

Cascade Trail

Cascade Trail  
Activities:

All of the above

Upper Troublesome Creek Trail (before 2006 flood)

Upper Troublesome  
Activities:

All of the above

Lower Troublesome Creek Trail (before 2006 flood)

Lower Troublesome  
Activities:

All of the above

Kesugi Ridge Trail (All or sections between Little Coal Creek and Troublesome Creek)

Kesugi Ridge Trail  
Activities:

All of the above

North Loop groomed snow trail

North Loop  
Activities:

All of the above

#### 4. What do you like about the trails you use and why?

I live and play in this area because of the terrain, remoteness, wildlife, and ability to be left alone. The trails are used primarily to access remote off trail areas.

#### 5. Are there additional trails or routes that aren't on the list above, but which you know about or use? Please describe, including location (Please use maps and drawings if this will help).

Just about every drainage, swamp, hill, lake, etc. are places I explore and play, in the winter, on snowmobiles. I don't feel it is necessary to show locations on maps as they are my personal experiences and memories. If others must know where I have been, they can look at a map and I've probably been there or very near to there.

This is an important issue as Denali State Park is developed and the management of it's visitors increases. One of the most cherished resources is to explore areas of remoteness and "untracked lands" with little or no interference from others. The basic rules are in place and that is enough. This is not to say every trip to the park is as everyone would want, but due to the remote nature of the park, especially in the winter, if one puts some effort into their visits they will find what they came for more often than not.

6. What areas of Denali State Park should be of highest priority for trail improvements or new trails and why?

Improvements of all existing trails should be priority one! Most of the summer hiking trails are in serious disrepair and obviously see little maintenance. The kiosks are in terrible shape, most of the outhouses, other than the new ones, are disgusting and the trailheads that are also pull offs on the highway are littered with trash and unmentionables. I think it is shameful that there were multiple helicopter trips to Curry Ridge for the privileged and elite to see the proposed visitor center when there is such a great need to maintain the existing infrastructure. What a complete misuse of public funds and puts the true needs of the park last!

Any new trails developed should be multi use and multi season. All maintained winter trails should be below treeline to insure the expensive task of grooming will not be swept away with the first stiff wind. Summer trails above treeline should be considered routes in the winter not trails.

7. Are there places in the park where trail development should be avoided and if so, why?

New summer trails above tree line should be minimal until the existing ridge trail is improved. Instead of having someone "design" a trail system above tree line, improve routes people naturally take to different locations. See what people want and then improve that. I encourage park managers to get to know the area better, I know of many cool areas within a short distance of the proposed visitor center that are not mentioned or identified in existing documents.

8. Please describe any specific trails you would like to see improved or developed. What activities should these trails be designed for (for example: hiking, horseback riding, snowmachining, bicycling)?

I would like to see a multi use/season backbone trail go from the south end to the north end of the park. It would interconnect with the future trails of the proposed visitor center as well as the existing trails that radiate from the Parks Highway. At the south end, this trail would branch off of the winter trail on the west side of the Chulitna and would also include a bike/pedestrian trail on the east side of the Chulitna. The two would intersect in the winter near Byers Creek and continue north more or less paralleling the highway, but with enough separation to give a park like experience. This trail would be accessed from all existing trailheads, waysides and campgrounds in the park. It would be used by all existing activities that occur in the park currently. Any management techniques would encourage cooperation amongst users and discourage rudeness, which is where most conflicts originate. The basic trails suggested in the latest visitor center draft plan would be beneficial to those facilities but without this back bone trail described above they will be limiting and lackluster. I feel this back bone trail will be what separates future development from being a "let's stop on the way to" to becoming "let's go to and stay for a while"

The other trail system that is overlooked but would be very beneficial is a "water" trail. Access to the Chulitna River at mile 132, Troublesome Creek, Byers Creek, Mile 156, and Pass Creek would be used by boaters and hikers alike. Currently the "Chilly" is very difficult if not impossible to access to put in or take out any kind of boat. The trail on the west side of the river could also be used to access the river in the summer.

9. How can potential conflicts between different types of trail users be resolved?

By encouraging sharing and good behavior. Basis Kindigarden 101 skills would go a long way.

10. Are there any general trail policies or management actions you think should be included in the plan?

The basic Alaska State Statutes should be reviewed and followed with any management actions. AS 41.21.020 is very clear on the limitations of the Department of Natural Resources specifically in prohibiting or restrictions to traditional means of access.

I have been told by Park Managers that everyone will have to give up something in order for everyone to "win". I don't know exactly what that means but it is a poor policy and management tool and should be cast out. Cooperation, sharing and multiple use works for those who are reasonable and put in the effort. Those who can't or won't are rude and selfish and their desires should receive little or no consideration. When you consider the wide range of seasons and the large number of days, over the course of a year, when there are virtually no visitors recreating in the park, it is incomprehensible to me that there is a need to segregate the masses for the benefit of the few.

11. Please relay any other information you think should be considered when developing the plan.

It took 2 years of intensive meeting to develop the multi use winter trails plan for the Trapper Creek and Petersville communities to the immediate south of Denali State Park. Most of those that opposed the plan and whined, sniveled and complained throughout the process have since come to me personally and thanked me for resolving many of the conflicts and complaints they had, primarily associated with snowmobile use in the area. Many of those same people are the ones complaining about snowmobile use in the park and I am sure are encouraging closures to snowmobiles on Curry Ridge. I feel with the right approach and a lot of patients, park staff can also develop a trail plan that will please most folks without closing any of the park to snowmobile use. I would encourage the State to politely tell the National Park Service to remove themselves from this planning process. They have clearly shown their biased feelings toward snowmobile use in the Draft South Denali Plan.

12. How would you like to be involved in this planning process?

Intimately. I live 4 miles from the park and work and play in it year round. I have over 18 years of experience developing and maintaining trails in Alaska State Park units and in the south denali area and want to help.

If you would like to submit additional comments please send them by Email to: [claire.leclair@alaska.gov](mailto:claire.leclair@alaska.gov)

*Thank you for your time!*

Your name:

Randy Crosby

Your Email address:

aksnwcat@gmail.com

Submit by Email



Thank you for your input

This page confirms that your comments were successfully submitted to us.

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Environmental Consulting  
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Added to contact list: Yes. My preferred method of contact is *Email*.

Topic: General Comments

Submitted 12/15/2009 at 04:23 PM:

Please keep focus on natural beauty by avoiding development. Scenic opportunities are often ruined by facilities.

**Leclair, Claire H (DNR)**

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**From:** Wasser, Mark [MWasser@adn.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 15, 2009 4:37 PM  
**To:** Leclair, Claire H (DNR)  
**Subject:** Denali State Park Trial Management Plan  
**Attachments:** atb86b1.gif

Ms, Leclair,

I am sorry I was not able to attend any of your Open Houses.

But did want to share some input on the Plan.

I fully endorse the policy to adopt the Sustainable Trail Design Framework for all new trails within the existing park boundaries.

This policy should also apply to ALL existing trails (within existing boundaries) - not just "when feasible" as indicated in the proposal.

Many of the old trails actually need more work because they were not made under Sustainable Designs.

Since there is a back log of \$67M I think there should be a moratorium on developing ANY NEW TRAILS until ALL

EXISTING TRAILS are brought in line with the sustainable framework.

Thank you for considering my input - and please do not hesitate to contact me if you feel I can be of any assistance.

Please keep up your hard work - the Park and all of us really appreciate it.

Thanks

Mark,

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RUTH WOOD

Ruth D. Wood  
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December 15, 2009

Denali State Park Trail Management Plan  
550 West 7<sup>th</sup> Ave, Suite 1380  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-13561

Via email to: [claire.leclair@alaska.gov](mailto:claire.leclair@alaska.gov)

Dear Planners:

I attended the meeting on the Denali State Park Trails Plan at Susitna High School. I appreciated the opportunity to speak with several State Parks employees.

I was dismayed, however, to hear a State Parks representative say that although the National Park was about protecting the resource, and the State Park was about providing access – implying that access has greater importance for the State than protecting the resource. Since this seems so contrary to the long term interests of the Park, I went online to look at the Alaska State Statutes, and found:

*Sec. 41.21.020. Duties and powers of Department of Natural Resources; limitations.*

*(a) The department shall*

*(1) develop a continuing plan for the **conservation** and maximum use in the public interest of the scenic, historic, archaeologic, scientific, biological, and recreational resources of the state;*

As I interpret this, DNR, and thus State Parks, has a responsibility to balance the conservation and maximum use of the Park. If there were a mandate only to provide access, there soon wouldn't be a resource to protect. I sincerely hope, that the Denali State Park Trails Plan will be written such that protecting the natural resources of the Park is the highest priority.

Denali State Park is an incredibly diverse and spectacular resource. By virtue of the fact that the Parks Highway goes right through it, there is considerable access that would exist even if the Park were never to have a Visitor Center or another trailhead.

The National Park Service, Alaska State Parks, and the Mat-Su Borough now plan to place the South Denali Visitor Center in a very sensitive area, i.e., the alpine near Lake 1787. The placement of the Visitor Center is not under consideration here, but where and how trails are developed in conjunction with the Visitor Center is. I looked at the trails called for in the South Denali Interpretive Plan. The plan calls for using board walks and hard surfaces to protect the tundra and provide universal access. While I support use of both board walks, and hard surfaces to protect natural resources, extensive use of board walks and hard surfaces may result in an

artificial environment (Potter Marsh on the tundra), completely changing the character of the area. And, a 3-mile gravel surfaced trail around Lake 1787 seems a nightmare to construct and maintain. The Interpretive Plan also suggests using natural features as barriers. and, while using natural features as a barrier might work well in a treed area, my experience is that the tundra doesn't offer many natural barriers.

I also looked at the Public Review Draft of the Chugach State Park Trail Management Plan to see if I could get ideas for how this plan might address the problems I anticipate. The Chugach Plan has nothing applicable. For example, I looked for a section on Monitoring, Enforcement and Maintenance in the Chugach Plan, but didn't find anything. Monitoring, Enforcement and Maintenance will be critical for alpine trails from the Visitor Center, indeed it is critical for all trails in Denali State Park. There must be sufficient staff to patrol the trails and keep people on them, and this plan should require sufficient staffing to monitor and enforce. I'd be interested in hearing the views of the NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program specialists on trail planning on Curry Ridge. Do they think the trails described in the Interpretive Plan will protect the tundra? What do they advise in terms of monitoring, enforcement, and maintenance?

But, these last concerns are not limited to the trails connected to the Visitor Center. **Before ANY new trails are built, Denali State Park needs to repair and figure out how it will fund ongoing maintenance on the existing trails.**

Indeed, my research of the Statutes shows that DNR has a duty to maintain state parks and recreation areas:

*Sec. 41.21.020. Duties and powers of Department of Natural Resources; limitations.*

*(a) The department shall ...*

**(4) develop, manage, and maintain state parks and recreational area**

Yet, the Upper Troublesome Creek trail was washed out by flood three years ago. The Byers Lake, the Ermine Hill, and the Little Coal Creek trails are overgrown and eroded in places. Every few years, employees or volunteers go out to do a little clearing, but they don't even have the tools to do the job properly. How can State Parks contemplate new trails, when the existing trails cannot be properly maintained. When I first visited Denali State Park almost 20 years ago, there were 2 full-time and 1 part-time park ranger. Not only has the Northern Susitna Valley grown exponentially, but recreational visitors to Denali State Park has too, but there is only 1 full-time ranger.

There is now a winter snowmachine trail that loops through the State Park. The public dollars spent to build and groom that trail are significant. There are no rules and regulations for the trail. The width of the trail is ample, yet there is not a swamp or open space the trail goes through that is not completely tracked from snowmachines. There should be at least some open areas where trail users are required to stay on the trails. It is certainly an aesthetic issue, but it is also a resource issues. Small creatures live underneath the snow in those swamps. Those

creatures are part of the food chain. What happens when the vole habitat is squashed by snowmachines? What happens to the hawks and owls and fox when there are no voles to hunt? What happens to moose when there is no vegetation to forage?

I have similar concerns about winter travel on the Tokositna River. For years, there was one main trail on the river. In recent years, the river has been bank-to-bank hard packed snowmachine trail. I used to see bear tracks and wolf tracks, along with the more common moose, fox, and otter. When the snow is hard packed by machine, there are no tracks, and you have to wonder, are the animals able to live there anymore? Is there anything for them to hunt? Is there anything for them to browse? And, if there is, can they do so without being disturbed.

These wetland swamps and riverbeds are an important biological resource. State Parks doesn't have an inventory of animals or habitat. State Parks doesn't know what impacts current uses are having on the resource, so they don't know what to protect or how best to do so.

The snowmachine route constructed a few years ago will concentrate use, relieving the pressure on other areas, but that doesn't mean that snowmachines traveling on the trail should be able to drive as fast as they want or leave the trail whenever they wish. The trails need rules and regulations, and State Parks never should have sanctioned the trail without sufficient controls in place.

Providing public access does not mean unfettered access. It does not mean that you have to give the public access to sensitive areas without protecting those sensitive areas. Access means reasonable access, in consideration of the natural resources of the Park and avoiding conflicts among user groups.

I was also upset to hear the same State Parks representative whom I referred to earlier say that snowmachine use on Curry Ridge was a traditional use. Snowmachine use on Curry Ridge is neither a traditional nor a historical use. Recreational use of any kind on Curry Ridge in the winter was infrequent until recent years. Not only is the vegetation on Curry Ridge sensitive, the area is wind blown for much of the winter. When there is insufficient snow cover, snowmachines tear up the sensitive tundra. One recent winter, State Parks was unaware that there was insufficient snow cover and that snowmachines were damaging the alpine until a local pilot took pictures and sent them to State Parks. State Parks can close an area to snowmachining when there is insufficient snow cover, but they first have to know there is insufficient snow cover.

And, on Curry Ridge, and throughout DSP, there needs to be balance in opportunities available for incompatible activities. Skiing and snowshoeing are not compatible with snowmachining. Areas and trails for nonmotorized recreation need to be established. Both Chugach State Park and Hatcher Pass Recreation Area have areas and trails that are nonmotorized, Denali State Park should too. The conflicts are not going to resolve themselves.

The following comments are my answers to the on-line Questionnaire:

## Questionnaire for Denali State Park Trail Management Plan

1. What are the most important issues to address and resolve in the Trail Management Plan for Denali State Park?

1. Repair and maintenance of the existing hiking trails accessing and on Kesugi Ridge and Curry Ridge.
2. Rules and regulations (e.g., speed limits, requirements to stay on the trail) for existing snowmachine trail in DSP.

2. How often do you use trails in Denali State Park?

1. In the summer, I hike Little Coal Creek, Ermine Hill, and Byers Lake trails. I probably use the trails about 3 times per month. I would hike Troublesome if it were opened and repaired.
2. In the winter, I recreate by dog team, ski, and snowshoe in Denali State Park, west of the Parks Highway. I begin spending a day or two a week in DSP and the surrounding area in January. By April, I am spending 3 to 5 days a week in DSP and the surrounding area.

3. Which of the existing trails listed below do you use and for what purpose (for example: exercise, hunting, berry picking, photography, adventure, nature observation, family activity)?

Byers Lake Loop - I use it for a nice walk when I don't have time to do an all day hike in the high country. I also canoe the Lake.

Little Coal Creek to Kesugi Ridge - Day hikes and multi-day camping trips on Kesugi Ridge.

Ermine Hill Trail - Day hikes and multi-day camping trips on Kesugi Ridge.

Byers Lake Activities: Little Coal Activities: Ermine Hill Activities: - day hikes, multi-day camping trips.

Cascade Trail - Occasionally hike it

Upper Troublesome Creek Trail (before 2006 flood)

Lower Troublesome Creek Trail (before 2006 flood)

Kesugi Ridge Trail (All or sections between Little Coal Creek and Troublesome Creek) - Day hikes and multi-day camping trips on Kesugi Ridge.

North Loop groomed snow trail – I have mushed and skied this trail. I don't use it very much because it is not aesthetically pleasing. It is big and wide, which is totally different experience than when you are on a narrower trail. Also, whenever this trail goes through swamps it becomes about 100 feet wide (I haven't measured it. I use 100 feet to make the point that it becomes extremely wide.) And, the machines get off the trail and run all over the swamps and hills. It looks like a highway rather than a beautiful snowscape.

4. What do you like about the trails you use and why?

I am a hiker who takes my time. I'll spend 2 nights going from Little Coal Creek to Ermine, maybe even 3. I like watching the bears – preferably from a distance. I like seeing wildflowers. I like picking berries. I like not knowing whether I'm going to have a warm day with excellent views of the Alaska Range or a cold, rainy, wind swept day where I can see nothing but my feet through the fog. I like watching raptors, song birds, marmots, fox, the weird fresh water shrimp in the lakes, loons. I like camping where other people are not camping. It will be very sad to lose these opportunities in Denali State Park.

In the winter, I like to mush on a traditional trail. A traditional trail is a fairly narrow trail where 2 travelers going in opposite directions can pass each other, although they might have to slow down. A traditional trail is packed by use, and has to be repacked after a new snow, but because it is the only trail, you can find it after a new snow. A traditional trail is in the same place year after year, and a good dog team can find it even when it is blown in. This type of trail offers views of untracked (by man) snow. Tracks of large and small animals are often around.

5. Are there additional trails or routes that aren't on the list above, but which you know about or use?

Yes, but Alaska is one of the few places where you find the best spots by studying a topo map and using a compass. In the alpine, you don't have to have a trail for good access. But, if too many people go to the same spot, you get an informal trail. Then, you get an improved trail. Eventually, a hardened trail. The experience is radically different, and developed trails with hardened campsites is not the experience I am looking for. But, if you find the magic spots, you will eventually have to improve the trails to protect the resource. You need to understand this and realize that you are displacing one type of visitor in favor of another.

6. What areas of Denali State Park should be of highest priority for trail improvements or new trails and why?

The highest priority for trail improvements should be the existing trails. By improvements, I mean rerouting where there are erosion problems or dangerous conditions and clearing brush. I do not mean making super wide trails, which I would hate to see.

The second highest priority should be obtaining funding for enough park rangers to manage the trails. Ten years ago, there were 2 full-time rangers and 1 part-time ranger in Denali State Park. Now, there's 1 full-time and 0 part-time rangers. The number of users has increased

exponentially, management problems have risen exponentially. The current plan is to bring more and more users, and no one is even considering how to manage use so that the park isn't degraded.

The third highest priority should be to provide winter trails for non-motorized users. The State and Federal Government have been spending tremendous sums of money to support motorized activities in Denali State Park and throughout the Mat-Su Valley. There has been money to construct motorized trails. There has been money to groom motorized trails. But, there is no money to monitor and manage motorized trails. There is no money to support non-motorized winter activities.

7. Are there places in the park where trail development should be avoided and if so, why?

Denali State Park is planning major development, but has done no wildlife inventories. You can't plan trails that avoid important habitat (summer or winter) until you know what animals you have, where they are, and what habitat is important for them.

Winter trails on Kesugi Ridge and on Curry Ridge should be avoided. The ridges are wind blown and significant winter use will result in destruction of the vegetation. Denali State Park needs to figure out now how they are going to manage winter use, and how they are going to close areas and enforce closure when there is damage.

Trails in the upper Tokositna River valley should be avoided. There should be one narrow, what I call "Traditional" trail along the river, and that's it.

There should be no trails in the northwest portion of the Park west of the Chulitna River. This is in a wilderness area in the backcountry. Access should remain backcountry access.

There really don't need to be a lot of new trails in Denali State Park. There will have to be summer and winter trails associated with the Visitor Center, but not in the rest of the park. Trail heads for trails accessing the tundra from the Visitor Center should be located as low as possible, not in the alpine. When hiking Little Coal Creek and Ermine, I frequently meet out-of-state visitors on guided hikes as they come out of the taiga and into the alpine. They have a huge sense of accomplishment and are awed by the open tundra. This experience is the real experience of hiking in Alaska. It will be lost if the hike begins in the alpine.

The accessible backcountry experience available in Denali State Park is an extraordinary resource for both the citizens of Alaska and those visitors who backpack. Don't try to make the whole Park a developed tourist attraction.

8. Please describe any specific trails you would like to see improved or developed. What activities should these trails be designed for (for example: hiking, horseback riding, snowmachining, bicycling)?



This question scares the heck out of me. People are going to answer that they want trails for any kind of activity that they might enjoy. Some activities are inappropriate for Denali State Park. For example, horseback riding in Denali State Park has already been shown to be disastrous when the horses trampled the tundra, and the permit was pulled. I do not ever, ever, ever want to see bicycles in the high country. A bike path adjacent to the highway would be ok.

9. How can potential conflicts between different types of trail users be resolved?

It will take a visionary with time and money. You need facilitated discussion that is area specific. You have to get people in the same room, get them to know each other as people, get them to listen, understand, and consider the other person's perspective.

10. Are there any general trail policies or management actions you think should be included in the plan?

Snowmachine trails should have speed limits and requirements to stay on the trails. There should be provisions to close trails or areas when necessary. There should be provisions to alternate use of trails or areas (e.g., areas closed to some or all use after a certain date, or areas closed to one user group one year and a different user group the next year.) Alternate use would be used in areas or on trails in areas attractive to incompatible user groups and to protect wildlife habitat.

11. Please relay any other information you think should be considered when developing the plan.

Everyone working on this plan should spend weeks in the park in winter/spring, summer, and fall. Don't just go on a day hike, hike Kesugi Ridge from Little Coal Creek to Byers Creek. Don't just take 3 days, take 5 days or a week. Do the same on Curry Ridge. Go camping in the Peter's Hills. Go mushing on the Tokositna River in midweek after a snowfall and again on a Saturday in March, and see how the experience differs. Ski the snowmachine trails. Ski Curry Ridge. Get to know the park. Most planners visit the Park by snowmachine because that's the way to cover a lot of ground fast. But, if you really want to do a good trails plan, get to know the Park from all perspectives.

12. How would you like to be involved in this planning process? I'd like to attend periodic local meetings so that we know what's being considered for the plan before it's drafted.

Thanks for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,  
/s/  
Ruth D. Wood

**Leclair, Claire H (DNR)**

---

**From:** Dee Pond [usswcd@mtaonline.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 15, 2009 1:32 PM  
**To:** Leclair, Claire H (DNR)  
**Subject:** Denali State Park Trail Management Plan

Dear Ms. LeClair,

My name is Daleann "Dee" Pond. I am the District Manager for the Upper Susitna Soil and Water Conservation District. During the summer we employ local students for our Youth Conservation Corps(YCC). We use grant funds that allow them to go out and do trail clearing, restoration and clean-up. The YCC currently take part in the Denali-Susitna Exploration Camp through the National Park Service. I am requesting that you keep us in mind in the event there is some way the YCC may take part in the proposed Denali State Park Trail Management Plan.

Sincerely,

Dee Pond, USSWCD District Manager

[usswcd@mtaonline.net](mailto:usswcd@mtaonline.net)

(907) 733-7923

USSWCD  
HC 89 Box 8461  
Talkeetna, AK 99676

Received  
12/15/09

# Questionnaire

## Denali State Park Trail Management Plan

1. What are the most important issues to address and resolve in the Trail Management Plan for Denali State Park?

SEE ATTACHMENTS

2. On average, how often do you use trails in Denali State Park?

- Have never used the trails
- 7-11 times per year
- Once per year
- 1-3 times per month
- 2-6 times per year
- Weekly or more

NOT MUCH LATELY -  
BUT I USED TO  
LIVE ON THEM -

3. Which of the existing trails listed below do you use and for what purpose (for example: exercise, hunting, berry picking, photography, adventure, nature observation, family activity)?

- Byers Lake Loop Main purpose(s): RUNNING, SWIMMING, PHOTOG, TO MEET & CHAT WITH NEWT CHINGRICH!
- Little Coal Creek to Kesugi Ridge RUNNING/PHOTOG/BERRIES.
- Ermine Hill Trail CHECK UP ON OUR WORK/RUNNING/PHOTOG.
- Cascade Trail EXHIBIT GROUP HIKE/RUNNING/PHOTOG.
- Upper Troublesome Creek Trail (before 2006 flood) SWIMS (ESP ULTIMA POLE)/PHOTOG/FISHING
- Lower Troublesome Creek Trail (before 2006 flood) QUICK ACCESS TO SOME PRETTY WILD NOW ABOUT OCT'86 FLOOD? GRAVEL BARS.
- Kesugi Ridge Trail: RUNNING/LAMA TREKKING/VISIT CRASH/PHOTOG.  
(all or sections between Little Coal Cr. and Troublesome Cr.)
- North Loop groomed snow trail DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS --

4. What do you like about the trails you use and why? (please provide trail names)

THE MEMORIES FROM 26 YEARS OF TRAIL LAYOUT & BUILDING --  
REMEMBERING THE BUILDERS, WATCHING THE USERS, LISTENING TO THEM, OBSERVING USES & WEAR --

5. Are there additional trails or routes that aren't on the list above, but which you know about or use? Please describe, including location, condition, why you use it, who else uses it, and anything else you think important to add. (Please use maps and drawings if this will help).

- 1- CURRY ↑ CURRY LOOKOUT - JOHN WENGER USED TO BRUSH IT - MAY BE GROWN OVER NOW, BUT TREAD'LL BE GOOD -
- 2- OLD '300?/HORSE? TRAIL 2 MIN FM CURRY LOOKOUT - EXC - TREAD .
- 3- P. HILLS TO FLING LAKE - TREAD WEARING IN IN PLACES -
- 4- MTN BIKE RTES IN P. HILLS VIA MINE ROADS (EG WILLOW CREEK ↑ POORMAN CREEK ↑ DIVIDE CREEK ↑ CANYON CREEK)

6. What areas of Denali State Park should be of highest priority for trail improvements or new trails and why?

- 1- CASCADES TRAIL - MAX. 8" - I'D PLANNED ON CONTINUING UP THE UPPER DRAINAGE, CROSSING IT TO N SIDE, FOLLOWING GENTLE GRADIENT INTO TUNDRA - THIS RT. WOULD SAVE CUT A MILE OR TWO FOR HIKERS COMING FROM BIGGS LAKE FROM LCC OR EM -
- 2- UPPER TROUBLESOME CREEK - DO NOT REROUTE FM MP 140, PAST COMMUN. TOWER, ONTO RIDGE AT THIS TIME - IF UTC TRAIL IS TO BE RETAINED, CONSIDER STRONGLY FOLLOWING THE CREEK - BUILD THE TRAIL A FOOT OR TWO ABOVE A GOOD HUMAN EROSION TRAIL SO IT WON'T BE SUCH A BIG LOSS WHEN TC LIVES UP TO ITS NAME AGAIN - WE'RE ONLY TALKING 3+ MILES - SEE OTHER UTC THOUGHTS - P 2
- 3- CONTINUED ON ATTACHMENTS - - OF ATTACHMENTS - -

7. Are there places in the park where trail development should be avoided and if so, where are those places and why do you think there should be no trail development there?

WEST OF CHULITNA RIVER - WE DON'T VERY CAREFULLY BEFORE CONSIDERING BUILDING TRAILS THERE - WE HAVE A QUASI-ACCESSIBLE WILDERNESS THERE (VIA SNOW OR INTREPID BUSHWACKING) - IF A TRAIL WERE BUILT UP ALDER CREEK OR COFFEE R OR HIDDEN R OR FOUNTAIN RIVER, THIS COUNTRY WOULD CEASE TO BE WILDERNESS - AS WELL, THERE ARE HIGH CONCENTRATIONS OF BROWN BEARS, ESA ALDER CREEK / L. 640 / COFFEE R - SECTION - CONFLICT LIKELY. (CONT'D)

8. Please describe any specific trails you would like to see improved or developed. What opportunities would these trails provide? What activities should these trails be designed for (for example: hiking, horseback riding, snowmachining, bicycling)?

COVERED IN # 6 -

9. How can potential conflicts between different types of trail users be resolved?

MUCH HIGHER PRICES OF GAS -  
 -- BY MATURE COMMUNICATION, EACH SIDE TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE DESIRES OF THE OTHER SIDE -  
 AIM FOR MUTUAL AGREEMENT / RESPECT -  
 BOTTOM LINE? CLEARLY STATED REGULATIONS  
 ENFORCEMENT -

10. Are there any general trail policies or management actions you think should be included in the plan?

WE HAVE A 35 YEAR TRADITION OF NON-MOTORIZED SUMMERTIME TRAILS. LET'S KEEP IT THAT WAY.

WINTER USE WAS PRETTY SLIM (BOTH NON-MOTORIZED & MOTORIZED) TIL LATELY WHEN DKP TRIED TO RESERVE CURRAY RIDGE FOR NON-MOTORIZED USERS & GOT STUMMROLED BY GUESS WHO? (IT'S EASIEST TO ORGANIZE AGAINST SOMETHING--) I THINK DAVE'S REASONING & IDEA ARE SOLID & HOPE IT COMES TO FRUITION SOME MORE SOPHISTICATED DAY. IT MAY BE A GENERATION OR TWO BEFORE WINTER USERS CO-EXIST HARMONIOUSLY & AFFORD EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ONE ANOTHER. BY THEN, THERE PROBABLY WON'T BE ANY SNOW ---

POPULAR CAMPSITES SHOULD HAVE CONSTRUCTION (DIRT OR WOOD) TENT SITES - THIS WILL CONCENTRATE WEAR & REDUCE SOME KINDS OF WEAR. OUTHOUSES MUST BE BUILT AND MAINTAINED. BEARPROOF FOOD

11. Please relay any other information you think should be considered when developing the plan.

CONTAINERS  
MANDATORY  
USE -

RANDY CROSBY & SONNY KRAONESS BOTH HAVE COMMERCIAL INTERESTS IN DENALI STATE PARK.

12. How would you like to be involved in this planning process?

COME & VISIT! LET'S GO HIKING/SKIING/RAFTING!

Contact Information

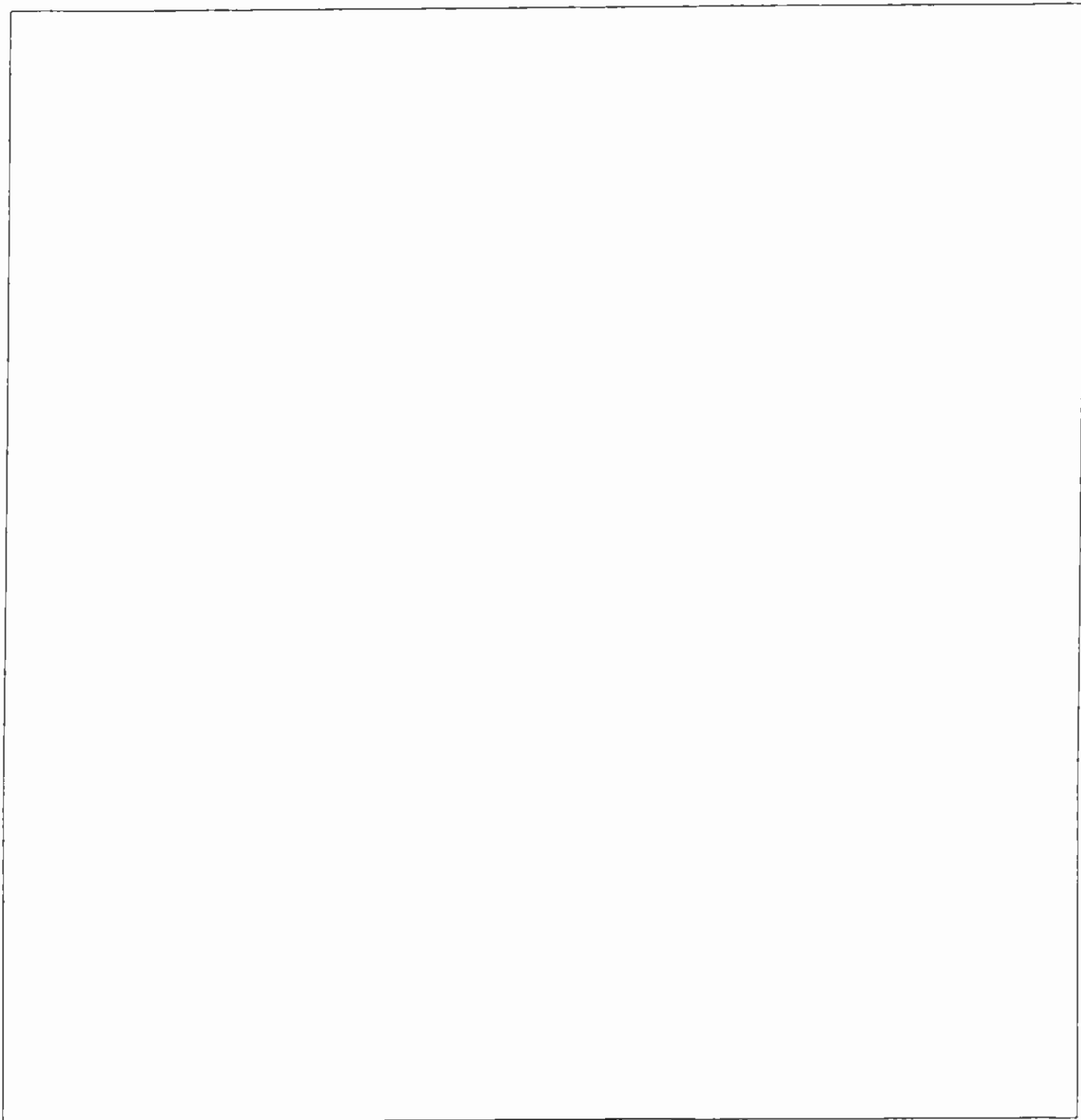
Name: DAVE JOHNSTON

Address: BOX 711 TALKEETNA ALASKA 99676

E-Mail address: CARLDAVE@HOTMAIL.COM

You can complete this questionnaire and find more information about the Denali State Park Trail Management Plan on-line at:  
<http://www.dnr.alaska.gov/parks/plans/denalitrailmgntplan.htm>

Please use this page for additional comments or to continue a response to a previous question.



Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts, experiences and ideas about Denali State Park's Trail System.

Comments and general ideas, including completed questionnaires, are due by December 15, 2009 and can be submitted via mail, email or fax to:

Denali State Park Trail Management Plan  
550 West 7th Ave, Suite 1380  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3561  
PHONE: (907) 269-8696/FAX: (907) 269-8907  
Email: [claire.leclair@alaska.gov](mailto:claire.leclair@alaska.gov)

# DENTAL STATE PARK TRAIL MANAGEMENT PLAN - QUESTIONNAIRE.

DAVE JOHNSTON  
CA 11 DECEMBER 2009

QUESTIONNAIRE #

1- (1) BEGIN ASAP A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF DSP NATURAL RESOURCES, INCLUDING NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS & LANDSCAPE FEATURES. WITHOUT THIS STUDY, RESPONSIBLE PLANNING & PARK MANAGEMENT IS IMPOSSIBLE. FOR 35 YEARS WE'VE HAD THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE. LET'S GET IT RIGHT - NOW! (P. 13, DSP MOUNT PLAN, GOALS & POLICIES, #2: THE DIVISION WILL PROTECT THE NAT. RESOURCE BASE OF PARKS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS)

(2) A. MAINTAIN EXISTING TRAILS -

CONTRARY TO STATEMENTS FROM THE MAF-SU SUPERINTENDENT, DSP TRAILS ARE NOT WELL MAINTAINED. (THEY NEVER WERE WELL MAINTAINED & THEY'RE WORSE OFF NOW THAN THEY USED TO BE.)

3. DEVELOP & USE A TRAIL MANAGEMENT PLAN -
- C. MONITOR & RECORD TRAIL USE, TRAIL WEAR, CAMP SITE WEAR, OTHER IMPACTS ON RESOURCES.
- D. USE DATA TO ESTABLISH TRAIL CARRYING CAPACITIES -
- E. IMPLEMENT A REGULAR TRAIL MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE.
- F. SECURE FUNDING & PERSONNEL FOR ON-GOING TRAIL MAINTENANCE -

(3) MOTORIZED VS NON-MOTORIZED WINTER USE.

THE COMPREHENSIVE STUDY (1-ABOVE) MUST INCLUDE  
2C. HOW HAVE SNOW MACHINES IMPACTED TOKOSITNA  
MOOSE? HOW HAVE HIKERS (ESP BEAR HUNTERS) DISPLAYED  
BERRY PICKING BEARS? HOW DOES VALLEY-WIDE SNOW COMPACTION  
AFFECT RED-BACKED VOLES? FOXES? WOLVES? HOW DO SNOW  
MACHINE TRACKS AFFECT PHOTOGRAPHERS? DO SOME SKIERS  
APPRECIATE SNOW MACHINE TRACKS? DO OTHERS AVOID  
AREAS W/ MACHINES IF POSSIBLE? THE CURRENT TREND SEEMS  
PRETTY MOTOR FRIENDLY. DON'T QUIET SPORTS FOLK DESERVE  
SOME SPACE?

(4) ASSESS NEED FOR FUTURE TRAILS & RE-ROUTES.

DO NOT BUILD UNTIL NEED IS ESTABLISHED & IMPACTS  
WEIGHED. WHAT IS GAINED? WHAT IS LOST?  
DO NOT BUILD TIL THOROUGH PLANNING IS DONE.  
DO NOT BUILD TIL FUNDING FOR CONSTRUCTION &  
FUTURE MAINTENANCE IS ACQUIRED.

THE FOCUS OF THE PRESENT DSP MOUNT PLAN SEEMS  
TO BE ON LOOP TRAILS, REACHING THE ALPINE ASAP.

WELL, NOT EVERYONE HAS THEIR HEART SET ON JOGGING FOR THE ALPINE -

OVERLOOKED IS A HEFTY PERCENTAGE OF OUR VISITORS WHO LIKE TO WANDER ALONG STREAMS, FISHING, SWIMMING, LOOKING FOR DIPPER & MERGANSERS. WHEN THE WEATHER'S FOUL, WHERE WOULD YOU RATHER BE?

ASSUMES FUTURE TRAILS / ROUTES ARE LAYED OUT WITH VISION, SENSITIVITY, TECHNICAL EXPERIENCE. IS ADOQUATE TIME ALLOTTED TO THOROUGHLY SUSS OUT ALL THE HIDDEN GEMS? ARE THE TRAIL PLANNERS REALLY INTO IT? ARE THEY PASSIONATE ABOUT IT? IF THEY'RE NOT, THEY SHOULDN'T BE OUT THERE. CALL ME!

TROUBLESOME CREEK .. WELL NAMED, EH?

MOVING THE TRAIL AWAY FROM THE CREEK BECAUSE IT MIGHT FLOOD AGAIN IS WIMPY. IT'S ROBBING OUR VISITORS OF FINE EXPERIENCES.

SAFETY CONCERNS? TO MY KNOWLEDGE, THERE'S BEEN BUT ONE BEAR ENCOUNTER, ABOUT OCT '83.

IF THE TRAIL IS MOVED AWAY FROM THE CREEK, THEN ONLY FISHERMEN & BEAR HUNTERS WILL BE UP THERE..

TO CLOSE THE TRAIL TO SAVE THE DRAINAGE FOR THE BEARS - I LIKE THAT IDEA. ESPECIALLY IF THE S SIDE VIS CNTR GOES ON CURRY RIDGE - FIVE DENS WERE DISCOVERED ON THE PROPOSED ACCESS ROUTE. THOSE BEARS MAY WELL HAVE BEEN DISPLACED FROM EXCELLENT DENNING AREAS BY PRINCESS & BY SANNY'S SUBDIVISION - IF THE VC GOES, THOSE BEARS MAY NEED A TROUBLESOME CREEK SANCTUARY. (IT MIGHT BE A BIT MORE OF A SANCTUARY IF HUNTERS WERE PHASSED OUT..)

IF HUNTERS ARE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE HUNTING TROUBLESOME CREEK, THE BEARS MIGHT BE SAFER IF MORE HIKERS (NON-HUNTING) WERE PRESENT.



6- (3) PETERS HILLS TO HOME LAKE. THIS IS A CLASSIC PACK RAFT TRIP. HUMAN EROSION TRAIL IS WEARING IN IN PLACES THROUGH PETERS HILLS. THIS RT IN THE ALPINE SHOULD BE FINE TUNED & MARKED EXACTLY WHERE IT SHOULD BE.

THE RT FROM THE ALPINE TO HOME LAKE IS TRICKY. BELIEVE ME! IT SHOULD BE LOCATED & BRUSHED. DAVE PORTER, GUN SHY OF SNOWMACHINES AFTER BEING STEAMROLLED BY CURRY RIDGERIDERS, WOULD NOT ALLOW ME TO FINISH THIS JOB. (A CREW & I BRUSHED CA 1 MI. OF GAME TRAIL W FM HOME LAKE AS A STARTER.)

TO ALLOW FEAR OF SNOWMACHINERS TO ROB PACK RAFTERS OF A TRAIL IS WRONG - THAT TRAIL CAN BE SLOTTED INTO A COUPLE OF SHARP GULLIES THAT WOULD SWALLOW ALL BUT V. INTREPID MACHINERS -

SEASONAL

(4) BIKE PATH 11 TO PARKS HWY, MP 132-169. FOR YEARS, SNOW MACHINERS HAVE COULDED AN ANCH-FBX RT. A BIKE PATH COULD SERVE BIKERS IN SUMMER, SNOWMACHINERS IN WINTER. THE PAVED TRAIL SHOULD BE LOCATED BETWEEN PARKS HWY & CHULIENA RIVER, AT LEAST C 300' FROM THE HWY, HIDDEN BY FOREST

REASONS:

1. SNOWMACHINE HEADLIGHTS NOT BOTH HWY. MOTORISTS. BUFFER -  
WHEN  
POSSIBL
2. SEGREGATE BIKE EXPERIENCE FROM HWY NOISE & EXHAUST -

RECALL OLD HWY CONSTRUCTION CUSHIONING FOR VIEWSHOTS. THESE ARE NOW YOUNG BIRCH OR ALDER THICKETS -

(5) (IF S-SIDE VIS. CENTER GOES ON CURRY RIDGE) - THE KESUGI RIDGE TRAIL SHOULD CONTINUE SOUTH TO CURRY RIDGE. IT SHOULD BRANCH OFF FROM THE EXISTING TRAIL A COUPLE OF MILES SOUTH OF COLOG & TREND SE, WINDING THROUGH THE "NAKED LADY LAKE" <sup>"AREA"</sup> LAKES. THESE LAKES & GRANITE CLIFFLETS ARE AT THE MOUTH OF TROUBLESSOME CREEK. THE RT WOULD STAY IN THE ALPINE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE - FROM THE N LADY LAKES AREA, THE RT TRENDS SW, EVENTUALLY ONTO CURRY RIDGE, PAST LAKES N OF CURRY LOOKOUT, CURRY LOOKOUT, ETC.

QUESTIONNAIRE #

7. IF THE DAY COMES, AS IN DNP'S POPULAR N SIDE HIKING AREAS, THAT HUMAN EROSION TRAILS ARE FORMING & <sup>ARE</sup> BEGINNING TO WIDEN AROUND BOGS, ETC. THEN MAY BE THE TIME TO BUILD A PROPER TRAIL (TO CONTROL THE RESOURCE DESTRUCTION.)

<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8" ?>

<TopmostSubform>

<Page1>

<TrailUse>**Two to six times per year.**</TrailUse>

<ImportantIssue>**1. Motorized vs. non-motorized uses of the Park. 2.**

**Maintenance of existing trails vs. construction of new trails. 3.**

**Snowmachine use in designated wilderness areas. 4. Inadequate information and inventories of wildlife use and sensitive/critical habitats.**

**5. Keeping people away from sensitive wildlife areas once they are identified. 6. Designation of non-developed (no trails) areas. 7. Damage from illegal summer ATV use of the North Loop winter trail. 8. Providing a variety of opportunities for a variety of recreational demands.**</ImportantIssue>

<ByersLake>**2**</ByersLake>

<LittleCoalCrk>**2**</LittleCoalCrk>

<ErmineHill>**2**</ErmineHill>

<ByersActivity>**Fishing, exercise**</ByersActivity>

<LittleCoalActivity>**Access to Kesugi Ridge; views; exercise; nature observation**</LittleCoalActivity>

<ErmineActivity>**Access to Kesugi Ridge; views; exercise; nature observation**</ErmineActivity>

</Page1>

<AdditionalRoutes>**I have really enjoyed cross-country hiking out in the "western corridor" near Peters Hills. This would be an excellent non-developed (no roads or trails) area. Unfortunately it is starting to be torn up by random ATV use.**</AdditionalRoutes>

<CascadeTrail>**0**</CascadeTrail>

<UpperPre06>**2**</UpperPre06>

<LowerTrouble>**2**</LowerTrouble>

<KesugiRidge>**2**</KesugiRidge>

<UpperTrouble>**Fishing; nature observation; exercise**</UpperTrouble>

<LowerTActivity>**Nature observation; river access**</LowerTActivity>

<KesugiActivity>**Views; nature observation; exercise; camping**</KesugiActivity>

<cascadeActivity />

<KesugiRidge>**0**</KesugiRidge>

<KesugiActivity />

<TrailLikes>**Kesugi Ridge and the various access trails have some of the most spectacular views in the entire state (on a clear day). (This won't let me enter anything else - continued in #11.)**</TrailLikes>

<trail2avoid>**1. Of primary concern would be areas that are particularly sensitive or critical for wildlife. I see there are a few maps in the Management Plan showing areas of wildlife use, but a complete inventory of important wildlife use areas seems to be missing. 2. I would love to see the "western corridor" kept as a roadless/trailless area, but I'm not sure you could control the ATV use out there. I have visions of being able to do a QUIET multi-day backpacking or pack stock assisted trip out there just wandering around. But I guess the motorheads want the same thing only without the quiet. As is, they are kind of tearing it up out there and some resource protection would be in order. It would be really nice to have a place the non-motorized folks would have to themselves.**</trail2avoid>

<priority>**I would love to see an emphasis on developing new trails that connect the Alaska Railroad corridor to the existing Kesugi Ridge trail system (provided maintenance backlog issues can be resolved). This would provide a great opportunity for access to the Park by rail instead of only from the Parks**

ELIE HENKE  
Subm. Head 12-14-09

**Highway. In the Park Management Plan map for proposed trails I see a trail from Curry, but nothing is drawn in at Indian River or Gold Creek. Those would also make good access points up to Kesugi Ridge.**

**1. I would like to see some kind of fishing access trail restored along Upper Troublesome Creek. 2. The Curry and Kesugi Ridge trail systems (including access trails such as Little Coal Creek, Ermine Hill, etc.) should probably be maintained to a standard that allows horseback riding. I understand there is a concern about introducing weeds and exotics in feed; I believe the Forest Service has many areas with restrictions requiring pelleted feeds to avoid these problems. It would be worth looking into. Continuation of Item #9 (wouldn't let me enter more than one line in that space): Provide a variety of opportunities for the whole spectrum of uses, from paved high use areas to non-developed cross-country areas. Different people want different experiences. I know you can't do all things for all people, but there should be plenty of choices.**

**willi@mtaonline.net**

**Ellie Henke**

**Will comment on future documents.**

**1. Separate motorized and non-motorized uses. (This won't allow any more entries - continued in #8)**

**1. Motorized uses, including snowmachines, ATVs and airplane landings, should not be permitted in the designated wilderness area. This should have enforcement to back it up. 2. Any public access planning should first take into account sensitive wildlife areas. Trails should be kept away from those areas. 3. State Parks should have the ability and funding to maintain existing trails before adding new trails. 4. You need to deal with damage from summer ATV use on the winter North Loop Trail. 5. Unless policy is changed to keep snowmachines off Curry and Kesugi Ridges you need a better system to monitor snow depth before snowmachines are allowed in, especially in windblown areas of the Ridges. In some areas there is visible damage from snowmachines running in inadequate snow depth.**

**1. Right now you have a policy that allows snowmachines to go anywhere if snow depth is deemed adequate. A plan should be developed that addresses: 1.) FAIR use of the park with areas set aside for non-motorized use; 2.) Conflicts with sensitive wildlife areas; and 3.) Avoiding damage caused by motorized use, especially summer ATV use of winter trails and snowmachines traveling in areas with inadequate snow depth. 2. It would appear that the park has inadequate information and inventories of wildlife use and sensitive habitat areas. You really need that information first before developing a trail plan. - Continuation from Item #4: I like a small, single track dirt trail where I can get away from crowds and enjoy the beauty of Alaska. For this reason I tend to avoid places like Byers Lake. I used to love Upper Troublesome Creek for the river and the fishing, even with the bear closure. Plus it is the closest drive from Talkeetna.**

PO Box 766  
Talkeetna, AK 99676  
December 15, 2009

Denali State Park Trail Management Plan  
550 West 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. Suite 1380  
Anchorage, AK 99501-3561

Via email: [claire.leclair@alaska.gov](mailto:claire.leclair@alaska.gov)

Dear Claire and Heather:

Thank you for conducting the scoping meetings last month for the Denali State Park trail planning project. Here are my initial thoughts.

I live in Talkeetna, and recreate extensively in Denali State Park ("DSP"), by dog team in the winter and hiking or rafting in the summer. My winter use is primarily in the south-west leg of the park and my summer use is primarily, but not exclusively, Curry-Kesugi Ridge.

I will first provide a list of the major issues that I think should be addressed and resolved in this process and reflected in the Trail Management Plan ("Trails Plan"). Following this first section, I will discuss the snowmachine vs traditional non-motorized recreational activity, and hopefully provide some useful suggestions.

#### I. Important issues to address and resolve

**First**, it is important to develop overall goals of this Trails Plan.

I bring this up partly in reference to the memo entitled "TRAIL MANAGEMENT POLICY" approved by Director King, effective March 10, 2009. Since this DSP planning effort is to develop a "Trail Management Plan," I conclude that the memo is intended to be the framework for this Trails Plan.

My concern arises because there is no explicit reference in the Director's memo to either protection of the natural resources of the applicable park unit (in this case, of course, Denali State Park) or to achieving a fair balance among user groups so as to eliminate user conflicts. By protection of natural resources, I mean the big picture, beyond things like sustainable trail construction and erosion control. I am thinking of broad areas of sensitive habitat, for example, that should be set aside with no trails or development of any kind allowed. And, by fair balance and avoiding user conflicts I am thinking primarily of snowmachine versus non-motorized use, but there are other issues like separating hunters from established trails and wildlife viewing areas or segregating the Boy Scout use so as not to impact the general hiking and camping public.

The Director's memo is mostly technical, with an emphasis on access. It does not incorporate "trail management" into the larger scope of management of the park as a whole. As I explain below, I think it is important to integrate the Trails Plan into

the larger management of the Park, and, accordingly, I suggest that the Trails Plan develop underlying goals, along the following lines.

Goals would serve as guiding principles when a trail route or use is contemplated. The first question should be whether the trail route or its intended use would adversely affect wildlife habitat, viewshed, or other natural or cultural resources of the Park. The second question should be how a proposed trail would affect balanced use among user groups, and the extent to which it is fundamentally fair and avoids user conflicts. And so, I suggest the following:

*Goal 1. The overriding goal, to which other goals are subordinate, is protection of the natural and cultural resources of the park in order that such unique natural features are available for future generations to enjoy and experience.*

Denali State Park is a gem. It is biologically rich, with an abundance of wildlife. It offers a variety of backcountry experiences, from river rafting, canoeing, and hiking in the summer to dog mushing, skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmachining in the winter. The landscape and scenic vistas are extraordinary, not just of the Alaska Range, but also the less dramatic like an exquisite string of beaver ponds or a high mountain tarn. Any development, trails or otherwise, should have an overriding goal of protecting the park's natural resources so that future generations may also experience and enjoy them.

*Goal 2. In a manner compatible with Goal 1, provide for appropriate and fair recreational trail use opportunities, avoiding conflicts between user groups.*

This would address snowmachine use vs non-motorized use as well as things like the safety and visitor experience impacts of co-mingling hunters with hikers/wildlife viewers and mixing the relatively large and numerous Boy Scout groups with smaller low-key camping parties typical of the general public.

**Second**, the Park lacks a comprehensive biological inventory. In order to appropriately route trails (or appropriately site other facilities) and determine trail use and management, it is important to know what natural resource values are present, where important habitat is located, and what times of the year are most important to the life cycle of the various wildlife species. It is necessary to identify important habitat, in order to avoid such areas entirely or ensure, through seasonal closures, that the areas are protected. DPOR should ensure that such studies are conducted.

**Third**, develop a mechanism to manage snowmachine use, which is necessary to protect the resources of the Park and ensure the quality of visitor experience for non-motorized users. This should be accomplished by the following:

- i) designate certain areas of the Park as off limits to snowmachines to allow non-motorized users a quality Park experience;

- ii) close certain areas to snowmachine use starting in mid to late March to protect wildlife in sensitive areas. For example, moose are in a negative energy balance in late winter, early spring and disturbance can put them over the edge or make them vulnerable to predation. Moose habitat, such as the willow thickets of the upper Tokositna valley should be left to the moose); and
- iii) consider the carrying capacity of the Park with regard to snowmachine use. There is no restriction on the number of snowmachines allowed in DSP, and there is no restriction on the manner in which they are used (e.g., no speed limits). Current trends are greater numbers and more technologically advanced machines, allowing more machines to go further and further into the backcountry, to places that were impossible to reach not so many years ago. From my observation over the past 15 or 20 years, there is no inherent limit to either numbers of machines or to their capacity to travel further and over more difficult terrain. The future picture is a blue-grey pall over the upper Tokositna valley each winter, a perpetually cut-up snowscape on the valley floor and on surrounding hills, devoid of wildlife. Snowmachine use is not self limiting; the limit must come from Park management.

**Fourth,** DPOR needs to develop monitoring and enforcement capacity. For example, I have heard credible reports of non-winter ATV use (four-wheelers, Argos) in the south-western arm of DSP, west of the Parks Highway and east of the point where the Tokositna River intersects with the southern DSP boundary. As far as I know, this ATV trespass activity continues undeterred.

**Fifth,** DPOR needs to develop a way to monitor snow depth and conditions, especially on Curry-Kesugi Ridge when high winds blow the snow away. One example: several years ago, a pilot reported to the DPOR Mat-Su superintendent that wind had blown the tundra bare on Curry Ridge. The superintendent immediately closed the area, but damage had already been done to the tundra. The damage would have continued had it not been for the pilot's report. DPOR needs to have its own system for monitoring snow conditions so as to take necessary action to avoid damage to the DSP resources.

**Sixth,** many of the trails that I use in the summer, namely Ermine Hill and Little Coal Creek, have not been consistently and adequately maintained. The problem most often is that the alders or other vegetation has overgrown the trail. There is also the example of the Byers Lake loop, where the bridge was in significant disrepair for at least one full season if not two. Before developing new trails, the capacity to maintain the ones that already exist should be solidly in place.

**Seventh,** the Boy Scouts are developing a High Adventure camp on the shore and south of Blair Lake, adjacent to DSP. The latest plan of which I am aware is that there will be 300 High Adventure boys per week, and that they will be going out into the surrounding lands on week-long camping trips in groups of 10 plus two adult leaders. That is 30 groups of 12 heading out into the backcountry, much of

which will be in Denali State Park. All the groups won't be on Curry-Kesugi Ridge, but a lot of them will be. This is potentially very intensive use, which will significantly impact both DSP resources and the quality of the experience of other members of the public. DPOR must develop general policy to manage the scouts' use, but it should also be addressed in the Trails Plan.

**Eighth**, the concept of carrying capacity also needs to be considered with regard to summer trail use. There will be a need in the near future to manage the impacts on the alpine vegetation from the increased use of hikers and campers, on places like Curry-Kesugi Ridge. The Trail Plan should contemplate carrying capacity, and look at management tools such as hardening and designating camping areas, a permit system, hardening trails over wet areas, and how to manage human waste.

**Ninth**, route trails away from bear denning or feeding areas (e.g., salmon streams) in order to reduce the chances of human-bear conflict.

## II. Need to manage snowmachine use in a manner that protects DSP's natural resources and quality of the non-motorized user experience.

The southern leg of DSP, west of the Park's Highway, is an area with which I am very familiar. The consequences of unrestricted snowmachine use in this area are significant. There are adverse impacts to other users, wildlife, and to the environment.

This area, for all practical purposes, is given up to snowmachines.

- Non-motorized users have been displaced.
- There are impacts on wildlife including: i) early arrival of trumpeter swans, ii) bear denning and emergence, iii) late season stress on moose which at that time of year are likely to have a negative energy balance, and iv) disruption of foraging patterns. The extent of these impacts to wildlife have not, to my knowledge, been studied. (They should be studied.)
- Adverse impacts to the environment include air pollution, the expulsion of 25% to 30% of their fuel unburned into the environment, running over black spruce and willows, and litter. Over the past 15 – 20 years or so, snowmachine use has increased dramatically, with corresponding impacts.

The attached "then and now" photos demonstrate the change in use. The photos show a dog trip a friend and I took to the upper Tokositna valley in 1983 compared to the look of the Tokositna valley in 2007. The 1983 photos show an intact snowscape, the classic Alaska beauty. The trip was a multi-day adventure, breaking trail in the wild backcountry of Alaska. The upper Tokositna is drastically different today, with heavy snowmachine use, as the 2007 photo illustrates.

The photos show how recreational snowmachine use precludes other uses. Folks interested in a quiet backcountry experience with the sense of adventure and discovery that an untrampled, natural snowscape provides are deprived of this traditional recreational opportunity. The heavy snowmachine use, and the hot-

rodding that often occurs, combine to so alter and diminish the natural quiet and wilderness qualities that are central to the non-motorized experience, that these folks no longer go there. They have been displaced by the noise, the smell, safety concerns, and the proliferation of snowmachine tracks on the river, over the swamps, on river banks, and on the surrounding hills.

This heavy and widespread snowmachine use and accompanying impacts to DSP's natural resources and on non-motorized visitor experience is well past the point where DPOR should act.

I think it important that this Trails Plan provide for rules and limits regarding snowmachine use in DSP, and for non-motorized set-asides within DSP, including the south-western leg of the Park, both in consideration of other users and for wildlife. For example:

- The willow thickets, home (or former home) to moose in the Tokositna River valley, in particular upstream of Bunco Lake, should be protected from the additional stress, especially late in the season when the snow is deep and the moose's energy reserves are at a low point.
- Bear denning areas should be identified and protected. I have seen bears or their tracks as early as mid March. Bears are very vulnerable to snowmachine harassment in the spring. The bears are easy to track and snowmachines can go anywhere, even among the alders, on the crust. On different occasions, I've seen the tracks of this chase, which in one case ended in an (illegally) killed bear.
- Trumpeter Swans arrive in the spring when there is plenty of snow on the ground and recreationists are still out and about. Their early spring habitat, the few areas of open water, should also be protected.

I don't know where all these sensitive areas are, but DPOR should conduct the necessary studies to find out and then protect them.

Possible management actions include:

- establish a designated trail up the Tokositna, avoiding sensitive habitat areas and implement and enforce rules, such as requiring snowmachines to stay on the trail and travel at a reasonable and safe speed. This would significantly reduce the impacts of these machines, and it would encourage folks to enjoy the scenic wonders around them rather than seeing how much performance and thrills they can get out of their machines:
- close the upper Tokositna to snowmachine use in mid to late March of each year... when the bears are emerging from their dens and the swans returning (this may not be necessary if the designated trail suggestion immediately above works out);



- supplement these actions by education of all winter users, to explain the rules, emphasize the importance of staying away from wildlife and sensitive habitat areas, and consideration of other users.
- develop signage, for direction, cautions, and location-specific reminders of the rules;
- close specific areas, in the south-west leg and other areas in DSP, to snowmachine use in order to offer non-motorized park users a quality experience: and
- funding to hire rangers to patrol and enforce the rules.

In interest of fundamental fairness and preserving a traditional non-motorized recreational activity, it is necessary that portions of DSP be closed to snowmachines. Both Chugach State Park and Hatcher Pass have areas that are closed to snowmachines. It is a fair allocation those park units. There is no reason why DSP cannot also have a fair allocation. The 1983 photos show how the upper Tokositna River valley was used in the past, i.e., quiet backcountry experience with the sense of adventure and discovery that an untrampled, natural snowscape provides. It is high time that this traditional and historical recreation opportunity is restored.

This kind of active management is a big change from the way things are now, but if DSP is to be a prime winter recreation area for all, active and enlightened management needs to happen soon. This Trails Plan is a good place to start.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



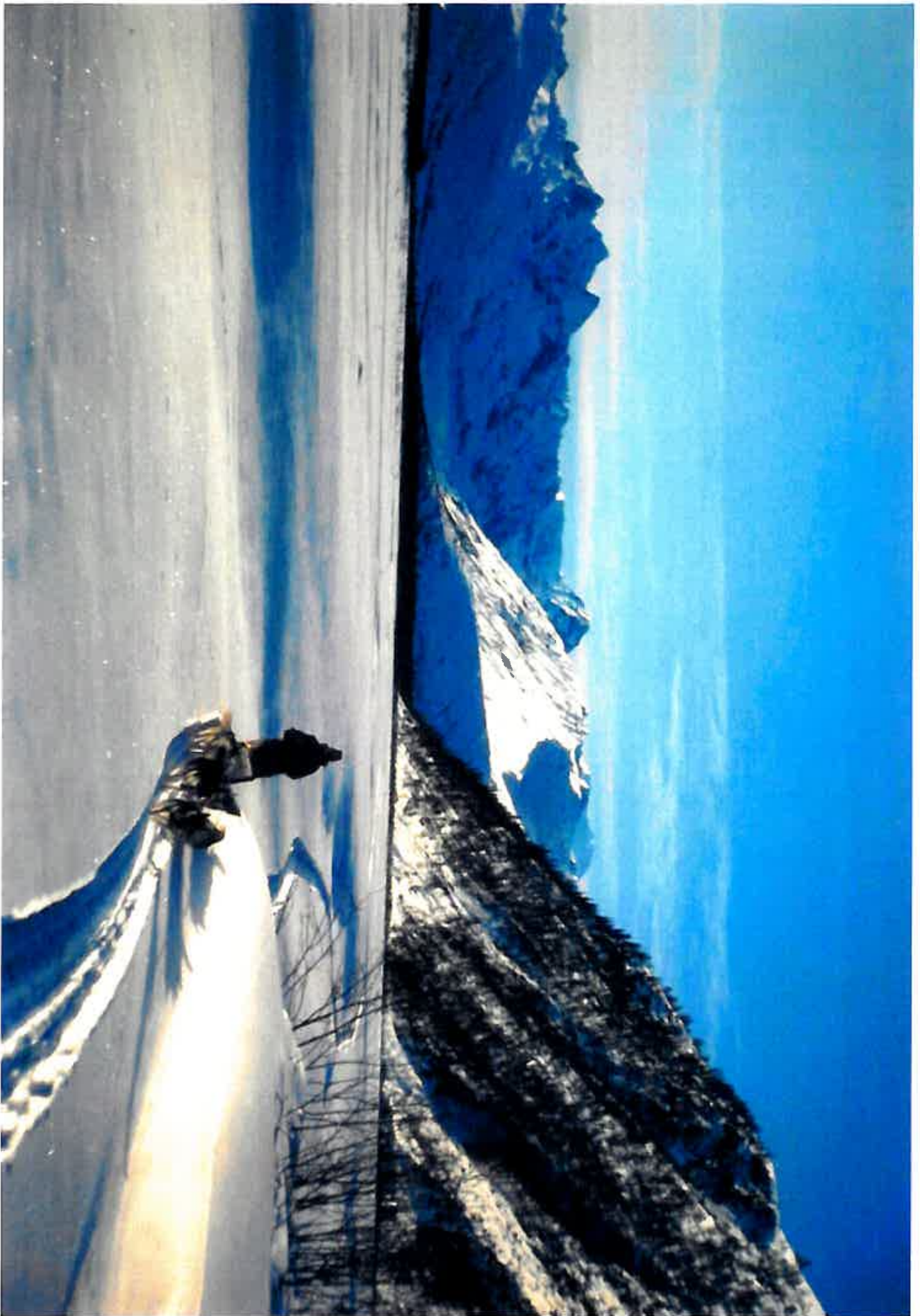
John Strassenburgh



Submitted by John Strassenburg  
w/ Scoping Comments

2007  
Tokositua R.





Submitted by John Strasser bush  
w/ Scoping comments

1983  
Tahosita R.



Submitted by John Strassenburg  
w/ Scoping comments

1983  
Takosita R.

## Leclair, Claire H (DNR)

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**From:** bewasser [bewasser@alaska.net]  
**Sent:** Monday, December 14, 2009 11:05 PM  
**To:** Leclair, Claire H (DNR)  
**Subject:** Fw: Denali State Park Trial Management Plan

We fully agree with Roger. We are Bob and Julie Wasser and we lived year round for many years in the cabin Roger bought. We feel for safety and user friendliness that it is imperative that the existing trails be upgraded and some more depth be put into these before others are presented. Thank you for your work. Julie and Robert Wasser.

----- Original Message -----

**From:** Roger Byrom  
**To:** bewasser Wasser ; Mark Wasser  
**Sent:** Monday, December 14, 2009 2:06 PM  
**Subject:** Fwd: Denali State Park Trial Management Plan

The closing date for comments is tomorrow 12/15.  
Thought I would share with you my comments.  
Happy Holidays,  
Roger

## Leclair, Claire H (DNR)

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**From:** Roger Byrom [rbyrom@addison.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, December 14, 2009 2:04 PM  
**To:** Leclair, Claire H (DNR)  
**Subject:** Denali State Park Trial Management Plan

Thank you for sending me the information.

I am sorry I was not able to attend any of your Open Houses.

But did want to share some input on the Plan.

I fully endorse the policy to adopt the Sustainable Trail Design Framework for all new trails.

This policy should also apply to ALL existing trails - not just "when feasible" as indicated in the proposal.

Many of the old trails actually need more work because they were not made under Sustainable Designs.

Since there is a back log of \$67M I think there should be a moratorium on developing ANY NEW TRAILS until ALL EXISTING TRAILS are brought in line with the sustainable framework.

Thank you for considering my input - and please do not hesitate to contact me if you feel I can be of any assistance.

Please keep up your hard work - the Park and all of us really appreciate it.

Regards,

Roger

# Questionnaire for Denali State Park Trail Management Plan

1. What are the most important issues to address and resolve in the Trail Management Plan for Denali State Park?

Maintaining separation of motorized and NON-motorized users during all seasons. Where current motorized use and NON-motorized (including horse back riding) is degrading the trail and environs, restrict that use to allow the impacted area to recover.

2. How often do you use trails in Denali State Park?

2-3 times per year, hiking/backpacking and in the future canoeing

3. Which of the existing trails listed below do you use and for what purpose (for example: exercise, hunting, berry picking, photography, adventure, nature observation, family activity)?

Byers Lake Loop

Byers Lake Activities hiking, watching wildlife and XC skiing

Little Coal Creek to Kesugi Ridge

Little Coal Activities hiking, backpacking

Ermine Hill Trail

Ermine Hill Activities hiking, backpacking

Cascade Trail

Cascade Trail  
Activities

Upper Troublesome Creek Trail (before 2006 flood)

Upper Troublesome  
Activities

hiking, backpacking

Lower Troublesome Creek Trail (before 2006 flood)

Lower Troublesome  
Activities

hiking, backpacking

Kesugi Ridge Trail (All or sections between Little Coal Creek and Troublesome Creek)

Kesugi Ridge Trail  
Activities

hiking, backpacking

North Loop groomed snow trail

North Loop  
Activities

4. What do you like about the trails you use and why?

Great vistas (in clear weather), being away from the more crowded trails in the Anchorage bowl, no ATV use on these trails

5. Are there additional trails or routes that aren't on the list above, but which you know about or use? Please describe, including location (Please use maps and drawings if this will help).

Yes- but these are strictly cross country and cover the BIG beaver pond SE of Curry Ridge.  
Not for those unable to navigate cross country though DENSE brush. Pace can be 1/2 mile per HR- I know from experience.



6. What areas of Denali State Park should be of highest priority for trail improvements or new trails and why?

North side (Little Coal Creek) access- to the E side of the Kesugi Ridge- to connect to the N/S trail at the S. end of Kesugi Ridge

Byers Lake- some sort of "steps where needed" w rope handline on the Byers Lake trail up/down from Curry Ridge- my wife is 4' 10" and some of the larger boulder "steps" required either taking her pack off and having it carried up for her or pulled up on a handline w carabiner. Coming down them in the rain with the slippery trail was no picnic.

An Alternate to Troublesome Creek access where all summer access is possible NOT just before and after salmon season.

7 Are there places in the park where trail development should be avoided and if so, why?

In the main E-W wildlife corridor(s) N or S of Troublesome Creek. If the bears, wolverines and wolves are on those natural game trails, no hiking trail should be planned for that area.

8. Please describe any specific trails you would like to see improved or developed. What activities should these trails to be designed for (for example: hiking, horseback riding, snowmachining, bicycling)?

Due to the sensitive nature of the tundra above "bush" line, I would like to see selective hiking trails from the W side of Kesugi and Curry Ridges over to the Talkeetna River with 1-2 6 person max campsites at the N/S end of each of these trails on the E. side of ridges in clearings above the river.

This would be for trails in the N/S end off of Kesugi/Coal Creekovert the Eastern ridges and in the N/S end off of the Curry Ridge Trail

Since my house backs up to Chugach State Park I see the negative impact of too many hikers on the the tundra subsoils and erosion in this area. Therefore, mountain biking and horseback riding on the Kesugi Ridge Trail would be a negative impact on the E-W trails noted above. An AKRR drop off could be done for take down watercraft above the Park, float to and explore Denali State Park and then paddle back to Talkeetna OR cross the river and make a "whistle stop" pickup by the AKRR.

9 How can potential conflicts between different types of trail users be resolved?

Education, fines/ confiscation motorized vehicles disobeying posted rules, hikers can spook horses

10 Are there any general trail policies or management actions you think should be included in the plan?

11 Please relay any other information you think should be considered when developing the plan

12 How would you like to be involved in this planning process?

Kept up to date on the draft and final plan

If you would like to submit additional comments please send them by Email to: [mtaonline@mtaonline.net](mailto:mtaonline@mtaonline.net)

*Thank you for your time!*

Your name:

Scott M Bailey

Your Email address:

smbailey@mtaonline.net

Submit by Email

ERIC  
TROJER

Received  
12/11/09

## Questionnaire for Denali State Park Trail Management Plan

1. What are the most important issues to address and resolve in the Trail Management Plan for Denali State Park?

Managing increased use of area trails while keeping the experience wild.

2. How often do you use trails in Denali State Park?

I live in Fairbanks and have only used trails in Denali State Park about 5 or 6 times. However, I have loved the experience each time, and I plan to return periodically.

3. Which of the existing trails listed below do you use and for what purpose (for example: exercise, hunting, berry picking, photography, adventure, nature observation, family activity)?

Byers Lake Loop

Byers Lake  
Activities: Family hiking

Little Coal Creek to Kesugi Ridge

Little Coal  
Activities: Backpacking, day hike

Ermine Hill Trail

Ermine Hill  
Activities: Backpacking

Cascade Trail

Cascade Trail  
Activities:

Upper Troublesome Creek Trail (before 2006 flood)

Upper Troublesome  
Activities:

Lower Troublesome Creek Trail (before 2006 flood)

Lower Troublesome  
Activities:

Kesugi Ridge Trail (All or sections between Little Coal Creek and Troublesome Creek)

Kesugi Ridge Trail  
Activities:

Backpacking

North Loop groomed snow trail

North Loop  
Activities:

4. What do you like about the trails you use and why?

I love the wild experience and solitude I get from a trail so accessible from the road. I love having long stretches of trail above timberline and the incredible views of Denali.

5. Are there additional trails or routes that aren't on the list above, but which you know about or use? Please describe, including location (Please use maps and drawings if this will help).

6. What areas of Denali State Park should be of highest priority for trail improvements or new trails and why?

The last time I hiked up to Curry Ridge from Byers Lake the trail was in horrible condition, but that was several years ago. If it has not been improved then it needs to be. Otherwise, I liked the somewhat rugged nature of the trails.

7. Are there places in the park where trail development should be avoided and if so, why?

8. Please describe any specific trails you would like to see improved or developed. What activities should these trails to be designed for (for example: hiking, horseback riding, snowmachining, bicycling)?

I see two possible loop trails on the ridge above Byers Lake. One could be a connector between Troublesome Creek Trail and Kesugi Ridge Trail through the rolling hills to the east (though this area might be too wet). Another possibility is a connector trail that leaves from Troublesome Creek Trail and drops down ridge to the west, then heads northeast back to Byers Lake Trail. Both would make for nice long dayhike loops. I think these trails would be best for hiking.

9. How can potential conflicts between different types of trail users be resolved?

Posting trail etiquette signs; making sure all major trail user constituencies have trails to use

10. Are there any general trail policies or management actions you think should be included in the plan?

That it is important to keep some areas fairly wild. More developed trails could be closer to the roads and campgrounds, but a rugged experience should be available for those willing to get farther back.

11. Please relay any other information you think should be considered when developing the plan.

12. How would you like to be involved in this planning process?

I am on the mailing list and that should be fine. I don't want to be heavily involved.

If you would like to submit additional comments please send them by Email to: [fbxtrails@gmail.com](mailto:fbxtrails@gmail.com)  
*Thank you for your time!*

Your name:

Eric Troyer

Your Email address:

fbxtrails@gmail.com

Submit by Email

## Leclair, Claire H (DNR)

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**From:** Pam Robinson [7332ski@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Saturday, December 12, 2009 7:20 PM  
**To:** DNR Denali State Park Trail Management Plan  
**Subject:** Denali State Park Trails Plan

Hi Claire,

Your main site seems to be down so we'll send you these comments listed in order of priority.

1. First and foremost, the Park must have someone dedicated full time in the summer that is charge of working on it's trails.
2. Maintain the current trails.
3. Finish construction of trail plans that have been in the works for years such as Byers Lake to the ridge.
4. Only after these three goals are achieved should the Park develop anything new.

The first three are so important that they completely out weigh new ideas.

Denali State Park trails are overgrown with brush, washed out in sections, heavily rutted by wear and run off, signage missing or destroyed, bridges and hopping stones are in need of replacement or missing and human waste is a health hazard in the most popular camp locations. The use today is much greater than in the past as this has become a destination trail system. With the start up of the new scout facility the issues I mention will become even worse. To add to this increase, Denali National Park sends regular hikers and its overflow hikers here since it is the only lengthy trail system anywhere near the National Park.

Instead of putting a bunch of time and money into new ideas, lets use this effort to restore what made this Park wonderful for the hiker.

Thank You,

Roger and Pam Robinson  
PO Box 606  
Talkeetna, AK. 99676

907-733-2754

**Leclair, Claire H (DNR)**

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**From:** Diane Okonek [dokonek@mtaonline.net]  
**Sent:** Friday, December 11, 2009 11:45 AM  
**To:** Leclair, Claire H (DNR)  
**Subject:** DSP Trail Management Plan comment

Dec. 12, 2009

Alaska Quiet Rights Coalition

P.O. Box 202592

Anchorage, AK 99520

Denali State Park Trail Management Plan

550 West 7th Ave, Suite 1380

Anchorage, AK 9905-3561

Dear Claire Holland LeClair, Project Leader :

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Denali State Park Trail Management Plan. The Alaska Quiet Rights Coalition (AQRC) is very pleased that Alaska State Parks is working on a trail plan for this increasingly popular park unit.

The Alaska Quiet Rights Coalition) is dedicated to protecting the rights of Alaskans to quiet places for the benefit of public land users, home and cabin owners, communities, businesses, wildlife, visitors, and future generations.

Alaska's natural beauty, wildness, wildlife, expanses of undisturbed open space, and peace and quiet are among its most cherished values, and Alaskans, our visitors, and future generations have the right to experience the natural sights, sounds and quiet beauty of our state. In the vast majority of cases, the obtrusive noise, summer landscape degradation and winter snowscape defacement, exhaust, and dangers of motorized recreation are incompatible with those special natural experiences and with quiet homes and neighborhoods.



Unfortunately, though, natural quiet and the opportunity to hear and enjoy natural sounds are increasingly hard to find in our state—a fact which would surprise the great majority of non-residents for whom Alaska is a potent symbol of the natural and the wild, not of noisy mechanization. Although there are many places in Alaska that look the same as they did 100 or more years ago, very few sound as they did only 10 or 20 years earlier.

Consequently, not only do we need to protect those quiet areas that still remain, but we need to restore many previously quiet lands to their former, more natural, more pristine condition. Most of us, until quite recently, took the restorative quiet of the outdoors for granted. We assumed that the backcountry would always provide a quiet refuge from the noise, busyness and artificiality of our towns and cities. That assumption, to our great chagrin, has proven to be false. We now know that natural quiet and natural sounds require our—the public, and the public's stewards, the land managers—constant vigilance if they're to survive even into the middle of our present century.

Denali State Park offers wonderful opportunities for hiking on Kesugi and Curry Ridges from where magnificent views of the Alaska Range can be enjoyed. Before planning the upgrade of existing trails or the routing of new trails, State Parks needs to determine what the carrying capacity of the trails will be, how to preserve and protect the soundscape and carry out wildlife studies to map critical habitat that trails need to avoid. (The proposed Visitor Center will attract thousands of people to hike on Curry Ridge and it is possible that hundreds of Boy Scouts from a camp being built at Blair Lake will take "adventure hikes" in the park each week.)

It is important to preserve Kesugi Ridge and Curry Ridge as outstanding backpacking wilderness experiences. Reluctantly we accept trail hardening, toilets and designated camp sites if necessary. We question whether Class 1 tread classification of up to 12 inches is appropriate for hiking on the tundra as all that is needed is a path that is well drained and sufficient to define the trail corridor. Existing trails, and any future new trails, need more regular maintenance than they now receive. Grass and brush need to be regularly trimmed, bridges repaired and downfall cut out. Existing trails that are either too steep to control erosion or lead people into prime bear feeding habitat (along salmon streams) need to be rerouted.

New trails: Due to the tundra surrounding the site of the Visitor's Center, the trails must be very carefully designed so that the tundra is not beaten down and people stay on the trails. All trails around the VC must be hardened, designed so shortcuts cannot be made, fewer loops than proposed should be developed so less area is impacted and walkers see fewer people and rangers ever present to make sure folks stay on the trails. Instead of a boardwalk all around the wetland at the north end of the lake place it just on east side. A hardened trail needs to be put in to get hikers from the VC up to Curry Ridge. A new trail should be put in to take a hiker from the VC down to Blair Lake. A trail from the railroad on the west side of the Susitna and Indian Rivers up to the Kesugi Ridge trail would make it possible for people to hike in Denali State Park from the railroad. Assuming the Transportation Center is open in the winter, (a) groomed ski trail(s) for skiers should be developed on the surrounding benches and placed so as to take advantage of the beautiful views.

AQRC believes in a fair and balanced allocation of the state's public lands for both non-motorized and motorized recreation. At the present time, there is a gross imbalance on the public lands that both unwisely and inequitably favors motorized recreation over muscle-powered recreation. In the interests of both good stewardship and fundamental fairness, this imbalance needs to be rectified. A reasonable proportion of public lands and facilities of all jurisdictions throughout the state should be set aside for quiet recreation—thereby also helping to protect clean air and water, fish and wildlife, scenic beauty, and the wilderness character for which Alaska is famous worldwide.

Natural quiet and natural sounds should be recognized by all public land managers as critical resources in and of themselves that deserve no less consideration than clean air and water or fish and wildlife and their habitat. Soundscape plans should be prepared. The analysis of proposed agency actions should include a determination of the possible effects on natural quiet and natural sounds and on the humans and wildlife that enjoy or depend on them. Alternatives should be considered.

Several general principles should apply to all public land decisions regarding the use of recreational motorized vehicles, both private and commercial, and whether used on the land, water, or air (some of these principles will not apply to all types of vehicles).

1. An analysis should be done of the possible effects on natural quiet and natural sounds and on the humans and wildlife that enjoy or depend on them.
2. Several alternatives should be considered, including ones that eliminate and that minimize impacts and conflicts.
3. Actions that would result in increased in motorized activity should be balanced with measures to increase opportunities for high quality non-motorized recreation.
4. Public lands should be closed (to motorized recreational vehicles) until specifically opened, rather than wide open until closed (the latter policy is the case on most public lands at the present time).
5. Even in open snowmachine areas, travel only on designated trails will sometimes be appropriate.
6. Motorized recreational vehicle use should be allowed only where it will not cause significant environmental or social harm.
7. Where motorized recreation is allowed, adequate funding for monitoring and enforcement must be provided.
8. Motorized recreation should not be allowed on lands designated, managed or proposed as Wilderness.

At present the entire area of Denali State Park is open to snowmachine use as long as there is adequate snow cover. AQRC requests that parts of Denali State Park be closed to snowmachine use for people seeking quiet recreation and for the protection of wildlife and habitat. In several other regions of the park AQRC requests that snowmachines be restricted to trails for the protection of wildlife, habitat, winter scenery and to make the park multiple use friendly. It is time to protect and restore natural quiet and the opportunity to hear and enjoy natural sounds to Denali State Park. There is great spiritual and restorative value in the soundscape resource of wild quiet and natural sounds in our ever increasing noisy world. Alaska's State Parks need to protect this important quality that its lands can provide if managed appropriately.

To provide places for quiet winter recreation AQRC recommends that Alaska State Parks:

1) Close Byers Lake and surrounding area to snowmachines. This would make a great area for family's to ski and snowshoe in the forest around the lake. There are three public use cabins that are close to the George Parks Highway making them easily accessible. Snowmachines could be used to service the cabins.

2) Close the south end of Curry Ridge to snowmachines from Troublesome Creek parking area due east to the Susitna River with the Curry Lookout included within the closed area. A snowmachine trail approximately following the section line from the highway east to the ridge top would form the northern boundary of the closed area. This would mean that the road to the VC and all trails surrounding the VC would be closed to snowmachines. While everyone would be welcomed to warm up and learn about the South Denali region in the Transportation Hub building, travel up the road to the VC and its non-motorized trails would be by snow coach not snowmachine.

3) For those areas of Curry Ridge open to snowmachines (N. of the boundary mentioned in #2), snowmobiling would be managed for family outings and sightseeing as follows: snowmachines would be required to remain on a trail, travel at moderate speed, pull over when meeting other travelers. The trail(s) would be routed around windblown tundra, marked so that people could find the trail and riding regulations enforced.

4) In the area of the Tokositna River, snowmachines should be restricted to corridors in order to provide places and areas for wildlife to be protected from area wide snowmachine noise and presence.

A very large percent of public lands in the rail belt and the Kenai Peninsula is opened to snowmachine use. Enclosed is an addendum listing public lands and how many acres are open and closed to snowmachine use. There needs to be a better balance allocating public lands for non-motorized recreation that are closed to motorized activity.

Thank you again for this chance to offer our comments.

Sincerely,

Alaska Quiet Rights Coalition

Brian Okonek, Vice President

Public Lands Opened and Closed to Snowmobile Activity:

In support of the Alaska Quiet Rights Coalition's (AQRC) recommendations for closures and various restrictions to be placed on snowmachining in Denali State Park as part of the trail management plan, we offer these facts regarding the opportunities available to the non-motorized user of public lands in winter and those afforded to motorized users. All of the 324,270 acres of Denali State Park are opened to snowmachining once there is sufficient snow depth; there are no trails or areas designated for the quiet recreationist. Similarly, in the surrounding Railbelt area there are few acres of any public lands set aside for non-motorized recreation.

AQRC believes that managers of public lands have a responsibility to: designate an appropriate balance of areas and trails for quiet recreation vs. motorized recreation; protect natural sounds and natural quiet, and enforce restrictions to protect quiet areas. We note the state's recognition of this issue in its recently released Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP):

"Recreation providers, user groups, and interested public should consider all viewpoints in recreation planning. Natural quiet is an essential resource and should receive specific treatment in planning documents as do other valuable resources. Quiet, like other resources, should be considered for its values and benefits; the wide variety of possible methods to protect and restore natural quiet to public lands should be considered." We urge the planners to implement this strategy in developing the Denali State Park Trail Plan.

#### A) Final South Denali Implementation Plan/EIS

The projected construction and design budget for Alternative C, the approved alternative, is \$28,126,000. Of that amount, approximately 10% is allocated to improving facilities for snowmachining by improving parking lots and turnouts to accommodate snowmachine trailers. Not one dime is allocated for improving trails or facilities for the non-motorized winter recreationist.

#### B) Allocation of the public lands in the Railbelt between non-motorized winter recreationists and motorized recreationists (Acres cited are approximate only.)

As described in the SCORP, the Railbelt is defined as including "... those urban and rural communities accessible from Alaska's limited road and rail system, generally from the southern end of the Kenai Peninsula, north to Fairbanks, and east to the Canadian border." The SCORP states that the Railbelt contains:

- the bulk of the state park system acreage and units (78, including 19 marine parks);
- 20,000,000 acres of NPS lands;
- 1,900,000 acres of Kenai National Wildlife Refuge;
- 5,700,000 acres of Chugach National Forest;
- 1,800,000 acres of Tanana Valley State Forest; and
- 16 state special areas (critical habitat areas, sanctuaries and refuges).

AQRC's analysis of which of these public lands in the Railbelt are considered open and which are considered closed, to snowmachining, follows:

#### Federal Lands

Denali National Park & P: 6,000,000 acres 2,000,000 closed to snowmachines (It should be noted that snowmachines were never legally allowed in the 2,000,000 acres of the old park.)

Wrangell-St. Elias NP & P 13,200,000 acres 0 acres closed

Kenai Fjords National Park 572,800 acres 0 acres closed

Kenai National Wildlife Refuge 1,980,000 acres 730,000 closed

Chugach National Forest 5,700,000 acres, but a more appropriate acreage for this analysis is that contained in the

Seward Ranger District which covers the Kenai Peninsula 890,000 acres 182,900 acres or 21% closed. (We would point out that though there are lands closed to snowmachining, a substantial majority of the most popular and attractive trails and areas have remained open to snowmachines.)

Bureau of Land Management hundreds of thousands of acres 700 acres (Campbell Tract) closed; plus a few trails and several RNAs in the White Mt. National Recreation Area and Steese National Conservation Area.

State Lands

1) SPOR managed/owned (including the units in the Kenai, Northern and Mat-Su/Copper River Basin and Chugach State Park districts only)

Chugach State Park (21 units) 493,471 acres 432,55` acres closed, 76 of 124 miles of existing and proposed new trails to be closed to snowmachines (Public Review Draft)

Denali State Park 324,270 acres 0 acres closed

Kachemak Bay SP/WP\* 370,399 acres 370,399 acres not opened to snowmachines

State Recreation Sites (SRS)\* 24 of 31 units are not opened to snowmachining; 7 units are.

State Recreation Areas (SRA)\* 1 of 14 units not opened to snowmachining. 3 of the 13 units which are opened to snowmachining when adequate snow have some restrictions. The most notable example is Nancy Lake SRA with 22,685 acres.

Approximately 15% or 3,402 acres (rough estimate) and 9.7 of 40 miles of trail are closed to snowmachining.

Kenai River SMA 44,850 acres Kenai and Skilak Lakes opened when adequate snow.

Hatcher Pass Management Area (managed in conjunction with the Div. of Mining, Land and Water) 212,380 acres 16% closed to snowmachines.

\*Note: It is not clear that the Kachemak Bay SP/WP, one SRA and the 24 SRSs not listed in the regulations to be opened to snowmachining should be considered closed or whether they are simply not suitable for snowmachining.

2) Division of Mining, Land and Waters manages millions of acres (the exact number is unknown) such as the 208,261 acres in the Knik River PUA or the 2,334,713 acres in the Nelchina Public Use Area. 0 acres closed. (All general state lands are subject to the "Generally Allowed Uses" which automatically permits snowmachining if it can be done without resource damage. DMLW lacks the resources to try to assess whether such damage is occurring and, moreover, lacks enforcement authority.

3) Division of Forestry Tanana State Forest 1,800,000 acres 0 closed.

4) ADF&G 16 state special areas unknown acres 0 acres closed

Other Public Lands

Talkeetna Talkeetna Lakes Park, 1, 040 acres and Numbered Lakes Park, 720 acres are both closed.

SUMMARY: with the exception of the trails and areas set aside in Hatcher Pass, Chugach State Park and Nancy Lake SRA, there are no closures or restrictions on state lands in the Railbelt which protect the rights of the non-motorized recreationist to a quiet, winter experience.

Questionnaire  
Denali State Park Trail Management Plan

Received  
12/8/07

1. What are the most important issues to address and resolve in the Trail Management Plan for Denali State Park?

Sustainability + longevity

2. On average, how often do you use trails in Denali State Park?

- Have never used the trails                       7-11 times per year  
 Once per year     1-3 times per month  
 2-6 times per year                                       Weekly or more

3. Which of the existing trails listed below do you use and for what purpose (for example: exercise, ~~hunting~~, berry picking, photography, adventure, nature observation, family activity)?

- Byers Lake Loop            Main purpose(s): exercise, berry picking, photography  
nature observation, family activity  
 Little Coal Creek to Kesugi Ridge all of the above, and adventure!  
 Ermine Hill Trail \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cascade Trail all of the above  
 Upper Troublesome Creek Trail (before 2006 flood) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Lower Troublesome Creek Trail (before 2006 flood) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Kesugi Ridge Trail: all of the above, especially adventure  
(all or sections between Little Coal Cr. and Troublesome Cr.)  
 North Loop groomed snow trail \_\_\_\_\_

4. What do you like about the trails you use and why? (please provide trail names)

Alaska has very few non motorized trails, especially for multi-day backpacking trips. Camping in the campground with my family, and exploring the delightful trails nearby, beautiful views and minimal elevation gain, a good introduction to hiking and exploring for kids + visitors. Kesugi Ridge is world class hiking + backpacking!

5. Are there additional trails or routes that aren't on the list above, but which you know about or use? Please describe, including location, condition, why you use it, who else uses it, and anything else you think important to add. (Please use maps and drawings if this will help).

6. What areas of Denali State Park should be of highest priority for trail improvements or new trails and why?

The trail from Byers Lake to Kesugi Ridge views needs to be improved—sustainable, with switchbacks to limit grade. Backpackers would enjoy starting at that end of Kesugi Ridge Trail occasionally and campground visitors would experience the incredible above tree line views.

7. Are there places in the park where trail development should be avoided and if so, where are those places and why do you think there should be no trail development there?

Important wildlife habitat areas should be avoided and anywhere water quality would be impacted or sustainability is impossible.

8. Please describe any specific trails you would like to see improved or developed. What opportunities would these trails provide? What activities should these trails be designed for (for example: hiking, horseback riding, snowmachining, bicycling)?

see #6

is there a possibility of working with the Boy Scouts to create non-motorized trails that connect with D.S.P. that could be used by the public? I know they plan on using the park's trails, let us use theirs too, in a partnership.

9. How can potential conflicts between different types of trail users be resolved?

I think our parks are an inappropriate place for any motorized use. They have many many other places to go. They scream the loudest etc, but that doesn't mean it's good for the park, or the land, animals or people. We go to the parks to replenish our spirits, and quiet, unspoiled nature and beauty do that to us and especially the visitors from out of state.

Trails sustainable for its intended use (horseback, riding,)

10. Are there any general trail policies or management actions you think should be included in the plan?

I hope the motorized users won't use their large numbers + organization skills to strong arm their way into more of the park. Snowmachine chase off wildlife + create stress on them in a stressful time of year: winter. Keep group sizes small, enforce leave no trace plan ahead for Boy Scout intentions to use the park + its trails. A partnership? The public using their trails too?

11. Please relay any other information you think should be considered when developing the plan.

[Empty response box]

12. How would you like to be involved in this planning process?

[Empty response box]

**Contact Information**

Name: Sharon McEntee

Address: P.O. Box 4 Sutton, AK 99674

E-Mail address: sharonm@mtaonline.net

You can complete this questionnaire and find more information about the Denali State Park Trail Management Plan on-line at:  
<http://www.dnr.alaska.gov/parks/plans/denalitrailmgntplan.htm>

Please use this page for additional comments or to continue a response to a previous question.

I love Denali State Park! I want to see it managed, and funded to be sustainable, and continue to be the treasure it is.

I have seen a pattern of uncoordinated, organized groups getting their way, many times to the detriment of the land, water, and wildlife.

Soil science supports certain uses of the land, as does wildlife science. In Alaska both are often ignored in favor of special interests. → (motorized users + Boy Scouts)  
+ Commercial enterprises

This park's close proximity to Denali National Park gives it special status. It needs to be respected and valued like the treasure it is.

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts, experiences and ideas about Denali State Park's Trail System.

Comments and general ideas, including completed questionnaires, are due by December 15, 2009 and can be submitted via mail, email or fax to:

Denali State Park Trail Management Plan  
550 West 7th Ave, Suite 1380  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3561  
PHONE: (907) 269-8696/FAX: (907) 269-8907  
Email: [claire.leclair@alaska.gov](mailto:claire.leclair@alaska.gov)



## Leclair, Claire H (DNR)

---

From: Brian Okonek [okonek@mtaonline.net]  
Sent: Saturday, December 05, 2009 6:23 PM  
To: Leclair, Claire H (DNR)  
Subject: DSP Trail Management Plan

From: Brian Okonek

P.O. Box 583

Talkeetna, AK 99676

To:

Denali State Park Trail Management Plan  
550 West 7th Ave, Suite 1380  
Anchorage, AK 99501-3561

Atten: Claire Holland LeClair,

Thank you for working on the Denali State Park Trails Management Plan. DSP is a fabulous place with spectacular views of the Alaska Range, wildlife habitat from salmon streams to alpine tundra and a variety of wilderness recreational opportunities winter and summer that is easily accessible from one of the main highways in Alaska.

For these reasons it is becoming ever more popular. Add to this the proposal for a destination visitor center and it will become the epicenter of tourist activity in the Susitna Valley. It is time to do comprehensive, foresighted planning for trail and backcountry use in the park. The following are my thoughts from the DSP Trail Management Plan questionnaire.

1. What are the most important issues to address and resolve in the Trail Management Plan for Denali State Park?

A) Develop criteria for selecting future trail routes that include:

Necessity and desire for a trail, routing to minimize impacts to wildlife, balance of motorized and non-motorized use, carrying capacity of trails to assure for a quality experience, funding to maintain existing and new trails and for monitoring of use and conditions and enforcement of regulations.

B) Conduct biological studies to identify critical wildlife habitat so that trail routes can be planned to reduce impacts to wildlife.

C) Create areas where motorized use is not allowed in the winter.

This is done in other state parks to separate skiers/snowshoers seeking a peaceful winter experience from snowmobilers. It is time to do this in DSP.

D) Maintain the present trail system on Kesugi Ridge and around Byers Lake. Trails are often overgrown with grass and brush. The park needs a full time trail crew to accomplish this.

E) Reroute the sections of the Byers Lake to Tarn Point trail that are too steep and causing erosion problems. Reroute the upper Troublesome Creek to move it away from the creek where bears normally feed on salmon.

F) Harden sections of the existing trails to eliminate the need for by-pass trails being worn in as hikers walk around wet sections.

G) Determine how future Boy Scout activities will be able to operate in Denali State Park with as little impact as possible to the natural resources and to other visitors. (This may require a trail system on Curry Ridge, hardened campsites, bear proof food storage, and environmentally sound toilet system and/or restrictions on where they can operate within the park.) The number of scouts envisioned to be at the Blair Lake camp will increase use in DSP significantly, with corresponding impacts, if they are authorized to operate within the State park.

2. What areas of Denali State Park should be of highest priority for trail improvements or new trails and why?

Kesugi Ridge. Kesugi Ridge offers some of the best hiking in Alaska because of the magnificent views of the Alaska Range, ease of getting to the trail heads, the relatively easy, short backpacking trips available and the amount of marketing the area has received in guide books. The trails have become very popular, but are now in danger of being degraded by overuse. The trails need to be rerouted and hardened where necessary.

A possible new trail that could add a unique experience to hiking in DSP would be a trail that would leave the railroad from the west side of the Susitna and Indian rivers and be routed to the Kesugi Ridge trail. Hikers could use the Bud car (Whistle stop train shuttle) for access to this trail from Talkeetna.

3. Are there places in the park where trail development should be avoided and if so, where are those places and why do you think there should be no trail development there?

Hiking trails should not be constructed along salmon streams. Doing so will cause unnecessary human/bear conflicts. Winter trails should avoid areas that are heavily used by wintering moose. Prime post rut moose feeding areas should be closed to snowmachine activity to protect the vegetation. There needs to be studies conducted to determine these seasonally important feeding areas. Heavy snowmachine use can have a severe detrimental effect on wintering wildlife by displacing them from prime feed and disturbing them at a time when they need to conserve energy the most. Land managers need to know where critical habitat is so that trails and what activities are allowed can be planned to protect park resources. It is unacceptable to route a snowmachine trail right through prime winter moose habitat because planners do not know where these areas are.

The Coffee and Hidden river valleys and Eldridge Glacier area should not have developed trails. These are wilderness areas that should be protected for that value. These areas of "accessible" wilderness on the west side of the Chulitna River provide an excellent place for people to have more remote experiences in DSP.

4. How can potential conflicts between different types of trail users be resolved?

The major conflict is between snowmobilers and skiers, skijorers and dog mushers. The snowmachine use taking place today is not a traditional use in DSP. In 1970 when the park was created and in 1976 when the park was expanded to include the western portion up the Tokositna River the snowmachines that were in the park were used as utility vehicles. People crossed the park with snowmachines to access cabins that were inholdings or on lands outside the park and/

or ran traplines. The number of people doing this was very small. Today's heavy recreational use has slowly built up over the years. Now there are not only a lot of unofficial snowmachine trails, but also tracks of snowmachines everywhere. Entire muskegs, lakes, and river channels become entirely packed by snowmachines. There needs to be areas in DSP that are closed to snowmachine activity.

Skijores and dog mushers also use packed snowmachine trails most of the winter. Before the snowmachine use became so heavy multiple use of the trails worked better. Now there are so many snowmachines operating at high speeds that the trails have become dangerous for dog mushers. The moguls get so bad that it is not enjoyable to run a dog sled and is hard on the dogs. The surrounding country adjacent to the trails is usually totally cut up by snowmachine tracks ruining the backcountry winter scenery. Skiers have to deal with the same problems on the trails. When they leave the trails it is hard to find a place where snowmachines haven't been and impossible to get away from the noise they produce. Participating in non-motorized recreation in areas where there is heavy, uncontrolled snowmachine use is not a pleasant experience. In the end snowmachine activity displaces non-motorized recreation.

There are no areas in DSP closed to snowmobiling. This is not a fair balance for managing State park lands or for protecting wildlife resources in the park.. It is not fair to the public who seeks out quiet recreation. DSP has matured to the point that it is time to establish areas where snowmobiling is not allowed. There needs to be areas where park visitors and wildlife can be free of snowmachine activity and noise.

I recommend that the Byers Lake area be designated non-motorized summer and winter. It is an ideal place for backcountry cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. There is a variety of topography nearby that offers wonderful skiing in the forest, but is not ideal for snowmobiling. There are public use cabins near the road so it is easy for skiers and snowshoers of all abilities to get to the cabins. Snowmachines could be used by park staff to maintain the cabins and haul firewood. I believe that Byers Lake would become a very popular destination for skiers and snowshoers knowing that they could enjoy the area without being disturbed by motorized recreation.

If the South Denali Visitor Center becomes a reality the south half of Curry Ridge (the area south of a boundary that runs from the Troublesome Creek wayside east to the Curry Ridge Lookout continuing east to the Susitna River) should be closed to snowmobiling for several reasons. A major component to the visitor experience at the visitor center would be interpreting the variety of habitats that surrounds Lake 1787'. To protect this habitat and keep it as intact as possible it will be necessary to close the area to snowmachine use. Snowmachine use on wind swept Curry Ridge will result in scarred tundra, broken down shrubs and small trees and change patterns of wildlife use. Snowmachine use will make the area less appealing to skiers or snowshoers because of the multitude of snowmachine tracks that will take away from the scenery and the noise and smell of the machines. The snowmachine riding experience on the northern portion of Curry Ridge should be managed with a trail system that riders are required to stay on which is enforced. A trail could be marked that routes snowmachines around bare wind swept tundra. A trail system would protect the vegetation (if routed correctly), keep motorized activity from having such a negative impact on animals because the machines wouldn't be every where and save the winter scenery from being destroyed by multiple snowmachine tracks looping everywhere. A trail system would provide a safe, family oriented snowmachine experience.

The Tokositna River valley is heavily used by snowmachines. Snowmachine tracks are every where and it is noisy when they are in the valley. This motorized use dominates the valley precluding other uses because the valley looks and sounds like a race track instead of the pristine wild place it once was. The backcountry has truly turned into a race track in many places. It would be much better for multiple user groups,

wildlife and habitat if a loop trail was established up the Tokositna valley. The trail would need to be routed where studies indicated the least number of wildlife would be disturbed. The trail would have to be marked so that it could easily be found after snow storms. To preserve the scenic value of the valley and protect the areas wildlife snowmachines would have to be required to stay on the trail and this regulation enforced. Speed limits would be necessary to make the trails safe and enjoyable for dog mushers and skijores. Slower moving snowmachines are considerably quieter than those traveling at high speeds and continually punching the throttle. This kind of trail system would enable people to take spectacular snowmachine touring trips, make the area much more multiple use friendly and protect other park resources.

Whenever a snowmachine trail is established there should also be restrictions put in place. Providing more trail and parking areas will increase the snowmachine traffic in the park creating more conflicts. Either set areas aside where snowmachine use will not be allowed adjacent to these trails so a person can ski away from the trail a get away from snowmachine use or create another region in the park that is closed to snowmachine use.

It will be necessary for there to be regular park ranger patrols in the backcountry to enforce park regulations and in parking areas to educate the public, information pamphlets and kiosks.

5. Are there any general trail policies or management actions you think should be included in the plan?

As facilities in the park increase attracting more visitors the lands of DSP can not be expected to accommodate all activities. I just do not see, for example, how there can be a visitor center that will serve tens of thousands of tourist on Curry Ridge while at the same time there being legal hunting within a quarter of a mile of trails, roads and other facilities. Curry and Kesugi ridges should be closed to hunting. The Spring bear hunt needs to be monitored much more closely. There are bear dens throughout the park. Emerging bears from hibernation are easy prey to hunters on snowmachines. State parks should accommodate people that wish to observe wildlife by closing areas of the park to hunting.

Hikers and boaters should be required to carry bear proof food canisters to prevent bears from associating people, packs and camps with food.

Typically DSP receives a lot of snow and there is an extended Spring season when it is easy to travel throughout the park on the snow. Trumpeter swans and Bald eagles return to area and their nests long before the snow melts. Little is known about how snowmachine activity affects these birds as they wait for the snow to melt so they can breed and rear their young. There needs to be wildlife studies done to determine such things and action taken to protect the region' s wildlife. It may be necessary, for example, to close the Tokositna valley to snowmachine use in early April to protect Trumpeter swans.

The plan should consider what the carrying capacity of trails are. Again if the visitor center is built there will be thousands of additional people visiting DSP. As Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley grow there will be more and more snowmachine use in the park. What will the impacts of future growth in snowmachine use be to the park and how much is to much?

No trailheads or parking areas should be built until management policies and enforcement capacity for the area are in place and trails and other necessary facilities are constructed.

6. Please relay any other information you think should be considered when developing this plan?

There needs to be more work done on developing the plan for a hiking trail system in the vicinity of the proposed visitor center near Lake 1787'. If the visitor center is to go at this high location it is going to be vital to figure out how to keep people on the hardened trails. The alpine vegetation is super sensitive and will quickly be scuffed away if people leave the trails, which they invariably do. The varied habitat that has made this a desirable place to visit will be degraded if this happens.

Trail easements across private property should be acquired for pedestrian traffic parallel to the Parks Highway north and south of the proposed Transportation Hub and campgrounds. In the future it will be desirable for there be a trail to for people to walk and bike on that parallels but is set back, with a buffer of natural vegetation, from the highway.

Work out an agreement with the National Park Service to do wildlife and habitat resource studies in Denali State Park. There needs to be good information gathered to be able to develop a comprehensive trail plan. This type of study has been encouraged by the public and State Park Advisory Board for many years and has yet to take place.

I found multiple bear dens while walking the proposed road alignment to the visitor center site with a planner from State Parks. What other prime habitat will be destroyed developing the park? How will this loss of habitat be mitigated? Again there can not be layer upon layer of development and activities added to DSP without there also being areas further protected and restrictions of activities put into place. Alaska State Parks are not only about access, but also about preserving for future generations the wilderness and backcountry qualities we are so privileged to enjoy today.

The South Denali Visitor Complex Interpretive Master Plan envisions an interpretive center and theater at the Visitor Center site near Lake 1787'. This portion of the Visitor Center could just as well be at the Transportation Hub. The Transportation Hub is going to be open year around. Moving the interpretive center and theater to this location would make these important educational facilities open to the public at all seasons. There is a need for this since the Interpretive Center at Denali National park and Preserve headquarters is closed for more than half the year. Moving these facilities to the lower location would also reduce the footprint of the Visitor Center in the proposed alpine location considerably making it far easier to blend in.

Thank you for considering my recommendations.

Sincerely,

Brian Okonek

# DNR - Mining, Land & Water Online Public Comment

## Denali State Park Trail Management Plan

Home <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/plans/denali/denalitrail.htm>

Thank you for your input.

This page confirms that your comments were successfully submitted to us.

Please print this page for your records.

Friends of Mat-Su Friends of Mat-Su  
P.O. Box 116  
Palmer, Ak 99645

Phone: (907)-746-0128  
Email: [foms2@mtaonline.net](mailto:foms2@mtaonline.net)

Added to contact list: Yes. My preferred method of contact is *Email*.

### Topic: General Comments

Submitted 12/07/2009 at 02:20 PM:

Friends of Mat-Su (FoMS) is pleased that a trails management plan is being developed for Denali State Park. We have the following comments for your consideration:  
Consider trail connectivity when creating the plan. It would be beneficial to have park trails connect with adjacent trails in the Mat-Su Borough so that it is safe and easy for travelers to go from one area to the next.

It is also important to separate trails into different uses. Multi-use trails are difficult to manage and frustrating for users. The park will be a friendlier place if there are non motorized trails and motorized trails in separate locations.

Focus resources on solving current problems with existing trails. It is important to plan for future trails, but improving the quality of the existing trails should be a priority.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

# DNR - Mining, Land & Water Online Public Comment

## Denali State Park Trail Management Plan

[Home http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/plans/denali/denalitrail.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/plans/denali/denalitrail.htm)

Thank you for your input.

This page confirms that your comments were successfully submitted to us.

Please print this page for your records.

Dolly Lefever  
7000 Tall Spruce Dr.  
Anchorage, Ak 99502

Phone: (907)-243 7027  
Email: [dolly@acsalaska.net](mailto:dolly@acsalaska.net)

Added to contact list: Yes. My preferred method of contact is *Email*.

Topic: General Comments

Submitted 12/03/2009 at 07:42 PM:

I saw a comment from a local to allow commercial use so locals "can make a living" In Chugach National Forest commercial use in way of horse guides have made trails long used by hikers unsafe and full of horse [REDACTED]. Only one guide benefits from destroying trails and the water supply by overloading trails with [REDACTED]. I would like to express a desire to not have commercial usage since this creates conflicts in trail usage. Why should one or two persons/companies benefit financially from public land use especially if it causes conflict with those using without financial interest. There are many places where motorized equipment can go. Can't there be one park where there is NO motorized vehicles to destroy the peace and quite? dolly

Questionnaire  
Denali State Park Trail Management Plan

JEFF  
LEBEQUE  
Received  
12-3-09

1. What are the most important issues to address and resolve in the Trail Management Plan for Denali State Park?

1) Set aside non-motorized use areas.  
2) Enforcement of non-motorized use.  
3) Establish criteria for what is considered overuse.

2. On average, how often do you use trails in Denali State Park?

- Have never used the trails
- 7-11 times per year
- Once per year
- 1-3 times per month
- 2-6 times per year
- Weekly or more

3. Which of the existing trails listed below do you use and for what purpose (for example: exercise, hunting, berry picking, photography, adventure, nature observation, family activity)?

- Byers Lake Loop      Main purpose(s): exercise, nature observation
- Little Coal Creek to Kesugi Ridge      "      "
- Ermine Hill Trail      "      "
- Cascade Trail
- Upper Troublesome Creek Trail (before 2006 flood)      "      "
- Lower Troublesome Creek Trail (before 2006 flood)      "      "
- Kesugi Ridge Trail:      "      "  
*(all or sections between Little Coal Cr. and Troublesome Cr.)*
- North Loop groomed snow trail

4. What do you like about the trails you use and why? (please provide trail names)

see # 3



5. Are there additional trails or routes that aren't on the list above, but which you know about or use? Please describe, including location, condition, why you use it, who else uses it, and anything else you think important to add. (Please use maps and drawings if this will help).

6. What areas of Denali State Park should be of highest priority for trail improvements or new trails and why?

Byers Lake to Town Point - too steep / erosion

7. Are there places in the park where trail development should be avoided and if so, where are those places and why do you think there should be no trail development there?

Avoid placing trails where bears eat - keep them away from salmon streams.

8. Please describe any specific trails you would like to see improved or developed. What opportunities would these trails provide? What activities should these trails be designed for (for example: hiking, horseback riding, snowmachining, bicycling)?

9. How can potential conflicts between different types of trail users be resolved?

Clearly demark and enforce non-motorized use.  
Silence is a rare and valuable commodity, and it is too often ignored.

10. Are there any general trail policies or management actions you think should be included in the plan?

Close some areas to snowmachines.

11. Please relay any other information you think should be considered when developing the plan.

Please consider the fact that silence has always been considered golden.

12. How would you like to be involved in this planning process?

**Contact Information**

Name: Jeff Lelegue

Address: P.O. Box 324 Talkeetna 99676

E-Mail address: jefflbc@xmission.com

You can complete this questionnaire and find more information about the Denali State Park Trail Management Plan on-line at:

<http://www.dnr.alaska.gov/parks/plans/denalitrailmgntplan.htm>

Please use this page for additional comments or to continue a response to a previous question.



Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts, experiences and ideas about Denali State Park's Trail System.

Comments and general ideas, including completed questionnaires, are due by December 15, 2009 and can be submitted via mail, email or fax to:

Denali State Park Trail Management Plan  
550 West 7th Ave, Suite 1380  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3561  
PHONE: (907) 269-8696/FAX: (907) 269-8907  
Email: [claire.leclair@alaska.gov](mailto:claire.leclair@alaska.gov)

*Received:***From:** janyeetee@aol.com**Date:** Wednesday, November 18, 2009 1:45:01 PM**To:** Leclair, Claire H (DNR)**Cc:****Subject:** Denali State Park Plan

- A. Your map does not show the complete Troublesome Creek Trail from the Parks Hiway
- B. Does not mention the Susitna River Plan (70s or 80s) of the past. This mentioned at the time, a creek access about 15 or so above the high water mark to where people would have access along Byers Creek below the Parks Highway next to private land to hike, fish and recreate. This area is closed off up to the State access trail on the south side of Byers Creek. Some enviromental group or lawyers has posted signs say you are required to have their premission to use the creek from the road on down a half mile to the trail access. .
- C. There was on one section of private land where the owner bulldozed access down into the creek.
- D. In the past my family members have ran into poachers in the fall. It was our luck to have been armed at the time.
- E. There has been use of riverboats with a 1/2 mile of the highway.
- F. There has been idiots wounding bears and not bothering trying to find them, or report them..
- G. As for access, my brother walks up along the Chulitna from Troublesome Creek to get to Byers Creek.

I have up to 10 years ago, from the mid 1970s fished the creek. But now it is not worth going there due to the access and lack of fish. Along with the people one has to deal with.

Read part of the Plan, when it comes to bears, people have seen too many Gentle Ben shows and National Geographic articles about bears. Some sneak around the forest quietly or with I-Pods, or are looking at the flowers and squirrels. Paying attention that once they step more then 10 feet from the road or parking lot is essential. That they are in absolute wilderness, that they are not in some theme park. In all the years I have been in the woods, I know enough to pay attention and make plenty of noise, I have had very few encounters with bears, that concerned me or the bear(s)..

As for the NPS wanting a south visitor center, let them us their own park land..

As for recreational mine, contact the local GPAA chapter, they would be more then happy to give input, since they have claims at the end of the Petersville Road. (Tom Ireland/tandmireland@gci.net or Bonnie Tishler/www.alaskagolddiggers.org

Leclair, Claire H (DNR)

---

From: Heather\_Rice@nps.gov  
Sent: Friday, January 08, 2010 2:26 PM  
To: Leclair, Claire H (DNR)  
Subject: Fw: Follow-up on Denali State Park Trails Management Plan

----- Forwarded by Heather Rice/AKSO/NPS on 01/08/2010 02:26 PM -----

William Naneng  
<will@sealioncorp  
.net>

11/18/2009 08:23  
AM

<Heather\_Rice@nps.gov>

To

cc

Subject

FW: Follow-up on Denali State Park  
Trails Management Plan

fyi

From: Eric Larsen [mailto:ericlarsenkfn@hotmail.com]  
Sent: Tuesday, November 17, 2009 8:30 PM  
To: David Cottrell; deseree noble; William Naneng  
Subject: FW: Follow-up on Denali State Park Trails Management Plan

this is the Denali trail group told them we had interest and input on the trail system many trails should end or start from our lodge

cabins, water stations, and dry tack for horses, call boxes camp sites are some of my Ideas every 10 20 miles something for hikers or back wood travelers

thanks Eric

Date: Tue, 17 Nov 2009 10:34:19 -0900  
From: claire.leclair@alaska.gov  
Subject: Follow-up on Denali State Park Trails Management Plan  
To: ericlarsenkfn@hotmail.com  
Eric-

Thank you for your time today. I appreciate Sea Lion Corp.'s interest in the Denali State Park Trail Management Plan. We have a website for the project and the address is:

<http://www.dnr.alaska.gov/parks/plans/denali/denalitrail.htm>

Please share this website as well as my contact information with other members of the Sea Lion Corporation's team who may be interested in the trail management plan.

Warm regards,

Claire

Claire Holland LeClair  
Natural Resource Specialist  
Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation 550 West 7th Ave., Suite 1380 Anchorage, Alaska  
99501-3561  
Phone: (907)269-8696  
FAX: (907)269-8907

Hotmail: Trusted email with powerful SPAM protection. Sign up now.

Andre Kaeppler

Submitted 11-9-09

&lt;?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8" ?&gt;

&lt;TopmostSubform&gt;

&lt;Page1&gt;

<ByersLake>**I recreate in the summer and winter in the parks. My favorite summer activities include hiking the trails along the northern segment of K'esugi Ridge between Ermine Hill and Little Coal Creek Trailheads. Additionally I like to hike in the Peters Hills to Long point. I like to raft the Chulitna and Tokositna Rivers and consider them water trails. In the winter I snowmobile west of the highway in the tokositina drainage and occasionally nordic ski groomed trails.**</ByersLake>

<ByersLake>**2**</ByersLake><LittleCoalCrk>**2**</LittleCoalCrk><ErmineHill>**2**</ErmineHill><ByersActivity>**canoeing, fishing**</ByersActivity><LittleCoalActivity>**Hiking, Alaska Range viewing, climbing peaks**</LittleCoalActivity><ErmineActivity>**hiking connection to little coal creek.**</ErmineActivity>

&lt;/Page1&gt;

<AdditionalRoutes>**From Long Point to Home Lake. This is becoming popular among packrafters and should be identified and considered in the management plan. Continued use without maintenance will cause resource degradation. A trailhead is needed in the Peters Hills. Summer and winter use is increasing annually, and degradation and vandilism is occuring at parking areas. More maintenance, facilities, and monitoring is necessary. I would also encourage a year round trail to the Curry Lookout from both the Sustina River Valley, and the South Denali Viewpoint.**</AdditionalRoutes>

<CascadeTrail>**0**</CascadeTrail><UpperPre06>**0**</UpperPre06><LowerTrouble>**2**</LowerTrouble><KesugiRidge>**0**</KesugiRidge>

&lt;UpperTrouble /&gt;

<LowerTActivity>**trout and/or salmon fishing, Alaska Range viewing**</LowerTActivity>

&lt;KesugiActivity /&gt;

&lt;cascadeActivity /&gt;

<KesugiRidge>**2**</KesugiRidge><KesugiActivity>**Snowmobiling, nordic skiing, Alaska Range viewing, winter moose viewing.**</KesugiActivity><TrailLikes>**They allow me to access a beautiful area, and provide me with opportunities to view stunning landscapes and various wildlife, exercrise is an added bonus, but no the sole reason I use the trails.**</TrailLikes><trail2avoid>**Although the Peters Hills could use some development, it should be minimized to maintain its wilderness feel. Facilities should be adequate, but rustic. The Petersville Road should remain gravel to perpetuate this.**</trail2avoid><priority>**Trails and trailheads along the Parks Highway need to upgraded. The Curry and K'esugi Ridge trail systems should be built up to sustainable trail parameter standards, and maintained at a level that meets the projected increase in use. The South Denali Visitor Center development has gone through a very thorough planning process and should proceed as indicated in planning documents. This development will be positive for the local economy and community.**</priority><specificImprove>**A park maintained trail from Petersville Road all the way to Home Lake via Long point (Hiking) A winter groomed nordic (non-motorized)**

**loop in the vicinity of Lake 1787 (nordic skiing) Bring existing trail facilities to sustainable and maintainable standards (i.e. Ermine Hill) A winter groomed trail along the Chulitna River Valley to Cantwel (Snowmobiling)**

</specificImprove>

<Email>**aka.akdre@gmail.com**</Email>

<name>**Andre Kaeppele**</name>

<ProcessInvolve>**In any way that I can. I am passionate about the area and would like to see a good guiding document develop.**</ProcessInvolve>

<conflicts>**Time sharing. Half the winter motorized, the other half non-motorized.**</conflicts>

<NewPolicies>**The state trail management policy.**</NewPolicies>

<NewInformation>**Consider how the plan will affect the local community. Allow for commercial permits so that the community can both make a living through guiding services, and responsibly promote the park's recreational opportunities to their clients (the public).**</NewInformation>

</TopmostSubform>



Carolyn Muegge-Vaughan

Submitted 11/6/03

```

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  <Page1>
    <ByersLake>I don't, but I do have a cabin on the Shulin Trail and have seen
    the degradation to the land over the past 20 years with the impact of
    recreational snowmachining and ATV off-trail usage. It has been very sad
    to watch our tundra being destroyed.</ByersLake>
    <ByersLake>0</ByersLake>
    <LittleCoalCrk>0</LittleCoalCrk>
    <ErmineHill>0</ErmineHill>
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    <LittleCoalActivity />
    <ErmineActivity />
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  <cascadeActivity />
  <KesugiRidge>0</KesugiRidge>
  <KesugiActivity />
  <TrailLikes />
  <trail2avoid />
  <priority />
  <specificImprove>I would like to see hardened designated trails for summer use
  and multi-use of those same trails in winter that are wide enough to be used
  by machiners, skiers, and dog teams. This has been done in Utah very
  effectively with groomed 30' wide one-way trails with speed limits and off
  trail powder areas for playing in the snow.</specificImprove>
  <Email>carolyn@normanvaughan.com</Email>
  <name>Carolyn Muegge-Vaughan</name>
  <ProcessInvolve>Email notices.</ProcessInvolve>
  <conflicts>Education!! Signage showing before and after pictures and a heavy
  TV/radio blitz pre-hunting season</conflicts>
  <NewPolicies>Montana has a great model.</NewPolicies>
  <NewInfomation>Grooming. Wide multi-use trails. Educational campaign like
  Montana that included before & after signage with pictures near the trails
  and along access roads.</NewInfomation>
</TopmostSubform>

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GREG CAMPBELL

Submitted 10.28.03

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 <Page1>  
 <ByersLake>**A few times each summer**</ByersLake>  
 <ByersLake>**2**</ByersLake>  
 <LittleCoalCrk>**2**</LittleCoalCrk>  
 <ErmineHill>**2**</ErmineHill>  
 <ByersActivity>**hikining**</ByersActivity>  
 <LittleCoalActivity>**hiking, backpacking**</LittleCoalActivity>  
 <ErmineActivity>**hiking, backpacking**</ErmineActivity>  
 </Page1>  
 <AdditionalRoutes />  
 <CascadeTrail>**0**</CascadeTrail>  
 <UpperPre06>**0**</UpperPre06>  
 <LowerTrouble>**0**</LowerTrouble>  
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 <UpperTrouble />  
 <LowerTActivity />  
 <KesugiActivity>**hiking, overnight backpacking**</KesugiActivity>  
 <cascadeActivity />  
 <KesugiRidge>**0**</KesugiRidge>  
 <KesugiActivity />  
 <TrailLikes>**The wilderness character of the trails and area. It is a great place near home to explore, and while trails are in place it still has significant wilderness character.**</TrailLikes>  
 <trail2avoid>**Restricting new developments to existing developed areas such as Byers lake and Denali viewpoint area would keep the wilderness character of places such as the Kesugi ridge trail system intact.**</trail2avoid>  
 <priority>**I think it is important to use the park's limited resources to first focus on trail maintenance before new trails are created. It is better to have a few good trails than many poor trails.**</priority>  
 <specificImprove>**A hiking trail linking the Kesugi ridge trail to the Susitna river would be welcome.**</specificImprove>  
 <Email>**xgcampbell@hotmail.com**</Email>  
 <name>**Greg Campbell**</name>  
 <ProcessInvolve />  
 <conflicts />  
 <NewPolicies>**I think it is important to use the park's limited resources to first focus on trail maintenance before new trails are created. It is better to have a few good trails than many poor trails. I would prefer less development and less fees. A simple trailhead with no development/structures and no fees is better than one with extensive facilities and fees. It is okay if fees are charged and used for trail maintenance, but not okay if fees are charged and used for unnecessary development/structures. Less is more.**</NewPolicies>  
 <NewInfomation>**Additional structures would not be welcome. In my opinion, Motorized vehicles such as snow machines have no place in the park. Horseback riding is detrimental to the trails, especially those that currently have a wilderness character, causing wider trails, erosion, polluting water with feces, and creating the need for more developments such as bigger bridges to handle stock. I have seen what horses can do while working as a trail crew member for the forest service in Wyoming.**</NewInfomation>  
 </TopmostSubform>

# Questionnaire

## Denali State Park Trail Management Plan

1. What are the most important issues to address and resolve in the Trail Management Plan for Denali State Park?

2. On average, how often do you use trails in Denali State Park?

- Have never used the trails
- 7-11 times per year
- Once per year
- 1-3 times per month
- 2-6 times per year
- Weekly or more

3. Which of the existing trails listed below do you use and for what purpose (for example: exercise, hunting, berry picking, photography, adventure, nature observation, family activity)?

Byers Lake Loop      Main purpose(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Little Coal Creek to Kesugi Ridge SUMMER & WINTER ACCESS TO KESUGI RIDGE TRAIL

Ermine Hill Trail ALTERNATE (WINTER) EXIT FROM KESUGI RIDGE TRAIL

Cascade Trail EXIT FROM KESUGI RIDGE TRAIL

Upper Troublesome Creek Trail (before 2006 flood) \_\_\_\_\_

Lower Troublesome Creek Trail (before 2006 flood) \_\_\_\_\_

Kesugi Ridge Trail: SUMMER & WINTER HIKING  
*(all or sections between Little Coal Cr. and Troublesome Cr.)*

North Loop groomed snow trail \_\_\_\_\_

4. What do you like about the trails you use and why? (please provide trail names)

GREAT RIDGE HIKING  
FANTASTIC DENALI VIEWS (WHEN CLEAR)

5. Are there additional trails or routes that aren't on the list above, but which you know about or use? Please describe, including location, condition, why you use it, who else uses it, and anything else you think important to add. (Please use maps and drawings if this will help).

I HAVE ONLY USED ESTABLISHED TRAILS SHOWN ON THE MAP, BUT KNOW OF SOME GUIDE-SICS TAKING CLIENTS TO CURRY RIDGE VIA HELICOPTER P. ACCESS,

6. What areas of Denali State Park should be of highest priority for trail improvements or new trails and why?

TROUBLESOME CREEK

7. Are there places in the park where trail development should be avoided and if so, where are those places and why do you think there should be no trail development there?

DON'T KNOW?

8. Please describe any specific trails you would like to see improved or developed. What opportunities would these trails provide? What activities should these trails be designed for (for example: hiking, horseback riding, snowmachining, bicycling)?

I'D LIKE TO SEE HIKING TRAIL CONNECTING KESUGI RIDGE WITH CURRY RIDGE AND ACCESS POINT FOR CURRY RIDGE AT THE HIGHWAY AT SOUTH END OF PARK -

9. How can potential conflicts between different types of trail users be resolved?

10. Are there any general trail policies or management actions you think should be included in the plan?

CONTINUED PROHIBITION OF MOTORIZED TRAFFIC IN SUMMER.  
SNOW MACH. OK WITH ADEQUATE SNOW COVER.  
SNOW COVER PROBABLY NEVER ADEQUATE ON THE RIDGE.

11. Please relay any other information you think should be considered when developing the plan.

[Empty box for additional information]

12. How would you like to be involved in this planning process?

[Empty box for involvement preferences]

**Contact Information**

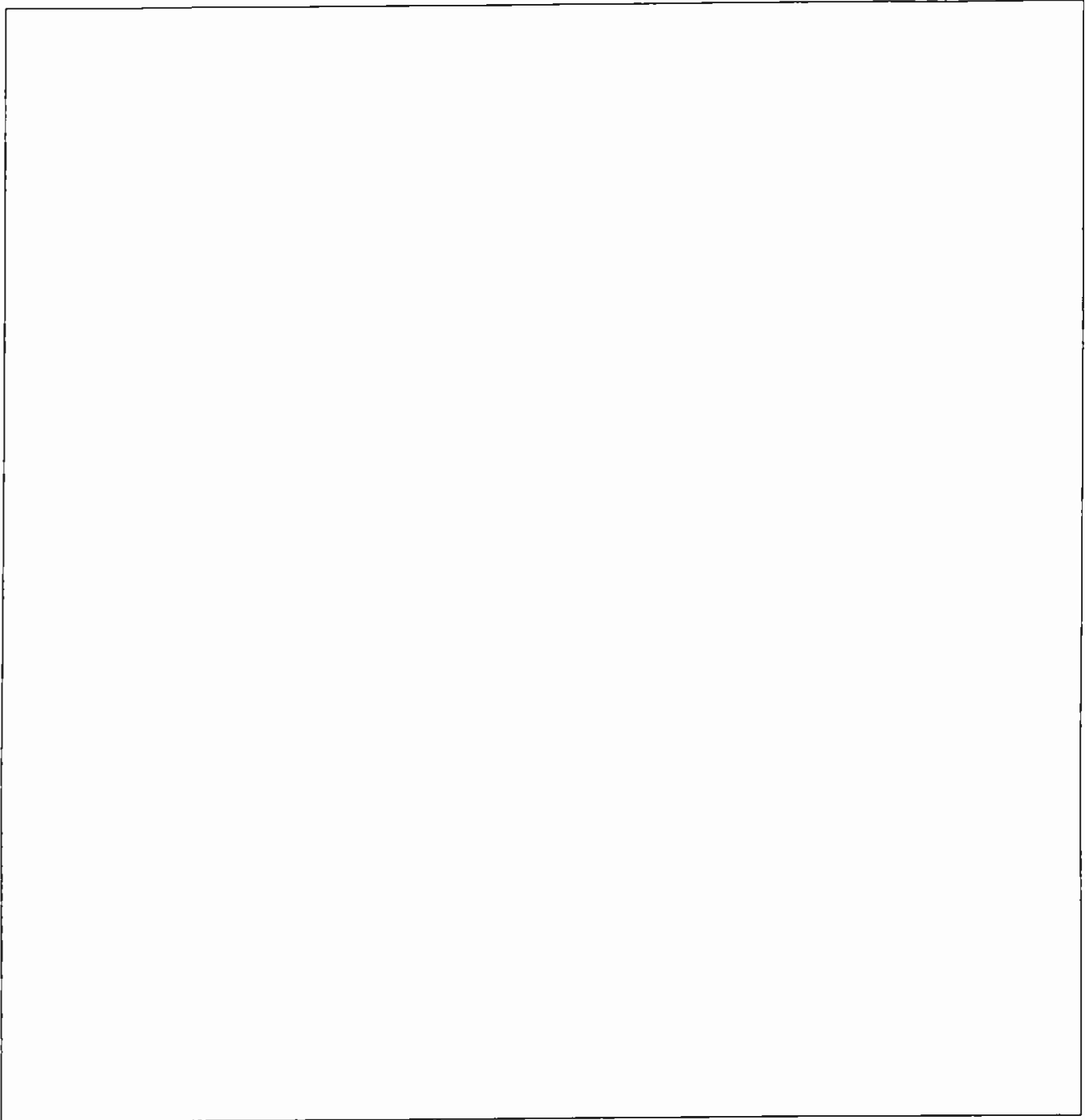
Name: DIAN DAVIDSON

Address: BOX 954 WILLOW 99688

E-Mail address: NIWADEAN@MTAONLINE.NET - *added to list R-12-3-09*

You can complete this questionnaire and find more information about the Denali State Park Trail Management Plan on-line at:  
<http://www.dnr.alaska.gov/parks/plans/denalitrailmgntplan.htm>

Please use this page for additional comments or to continue a response to a previous question.



Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts, experiences and ideas about Denali State Park's Trail System.

Comments and general ideas, including completed questionnaires, are due by December 15, 2009 and can be submitted via mail, email or fax to:

Denali State Park Trail Management Plan  
550 West 7th Ave, Suite 1380  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3561  
PHONE: (907) 269-8696/FAX: (907) 269-8907  
Email: [claire.leclair@alaska.gov](mailto:claire.leclair@alaska.gov)

## Questionnaire for Denali State Park Trail Management Plan

1. What are the most important issues to address and resolve in the Trail Management Plan for Denali State Park?

To consider that some of the trails can be used by snowmachiners in winter and hikers in the summer. Open use allows the best use of state funds to construct trails that benefits several user groups. Some trails are not used by hikers because of the swamps but are important to snowmachiners, other trails are generally only used by hikers because terrain is prohibitive for snowmachines. However when possible I hope that snowmachine trail funding is increased because I believe that Denali State Park has wonderful terrain for snowmachine use with the added benefit of a huge snow pack that protects the terrain.

Snowmachiners provide one of the largest economic boost to local businesses in the area (restaurants, lodges, filling stations, etc) and hopefully the state will keep the park open for multiple use.

As a nordic skier also I do see some benefit in having one or two dedicated ski trails; perhaps ski/dog sled routes would facilitate multiple use of some areas with level to rolling terrain.

2. How often do you use trails in Denali State Park?

Six to eight days a month.

3. Which of the existing trails listed below do you use and for what purpose (for example: exercise, hunting, berry picking, photography, adventure, nature observation, family activity)?

Byers Lake Loop

Byers Lake  
Activities: Hiking, nature walks, hunting in area

Little Coal Creek to Kesugi Ridge

Little Coal  
Activities:

Ermine Hill Trail

Ermine Hill  
Activities:

Cascade Trail

Cascade Trail  
Activities:

Upper Troublesome Creek Trail (before 2006 flood)

Upper Troublesome  
Activities:

Lower Troublesome Creek Trail (before 2006 flood)

Lower Troublesome  
Activities:

Hiking, fishing

Kesugi Ridge Trail (All or sections between Little Coal Creek and Troublesome Creek)

Kesugi Ridge Trail  
Activities:

Hiking

North Loop groomed snow trail

North Loop  
Activities:

Snowmachining, hunting,

4. What do you like about the trails you use and why?

Access to beautiful country, outdoor activities, away from crowds of cities.

5. Are there additional trails or routes that aren't on the list above, but which you know about or use? Please describe, including location (Please use maps and drawings if this will help).

Curry Ridge trails (snowmachining, hiking, skiing).



6. What areas of Denali State Park should be of highest priority for trail improvements or new trails and why?

7. Are there places in the park where trail development should be avoided and if so, why?

Place trails away from state lottery subdivisions to allow visitors the opportunity to have quiet, natural setting in which to hike, ski, snowmachine, fish, etc. Also make sure there is adequate maintained parking available for users.

However, I do not think fee stations or gates should be constructed because the area is too large to monitor well and the monitoring costs would outweigh the income from fee stations.

8. Please describe any specific trails you would like to see improved or developed. What activities should these trails to be designed for (for example: hiking, horseback riding, snowmachining, bicycling)?

Again, do not make trails into existing subdivisions which have multiple cabins in place. Residents would find day-users on private property an unwanted result.

9. How can potential conflicts between different types of trail users be resolved?

See question #1

10. Are there any general trail policies or management actions you think should be included in the plan?

11. Please relay any other information you think should be considered when developing the plan.

12. How would you like to be involved in this planning process?

I would consider some work on committees reviewing trail plans.

If you would like to submit additional comments please send them by Email to: [claire.leclair@alaska.gov](mailto:claire.leclair@alaska.gov)

*Thank you for your time!*

Your name:

SueS

Your Email address:

craiglist5336@yahoo.com

Submit by Email

## Leclair, Claire H (DNR)

From: aanyeetee@aol.com  
Sent: Wednesday, November 18, 2009 1:46 PM  
To: Leclair, Claire H (DNR)  
Subject: Denali State Park Plan

added to list  
2-11-12  
12-3-09

- A. Your map does not show the complete Troublesome Creek Trail from the Parks Hiway
- B. Does not mention the Susitna River Plan (70s or 80s) of the past. This mentioned at the time, a creek access about 15 or so above the high water mark to where people would have access along Byers Creek below the Parks Highway next to private land to hike, fish and recreate. This area is closed off up to the State access trail on the south side of Byers Creek. Some enviromental group or lawyers has posted signs say you are required to have their premission to use the creek from the road on down a half mile to the trail access. .
- C. There was on one section of private land where the owner bulldozed access down into the creek.
- D. In the past my family members have ran into poachers in the fall. It was our luck to have been armed at the time.
- E. There has been use of riverboats with a 1/2 mile of the highway.
- F. There has been idiots wounding bears and not bothering trying to find them, or report them..
- G. As for access, my brother walks up along the Chulitna from Troublesome Creek to get to Byers Creek.

I have up to 10 years ago, from the mid 1970s fished the creek. But now it is not worth going there due to the access and lack of fish. Along with the people one has to deal with.

Read part of the Plan, when it comes to bears, people have seen too many Gentle Ben shows and National Geographic articles about bears. Some sneak around the forest quietly or with I-Pods, or are looking at the flowers and squirrels. Paying attention that once they step more then 10 feet from the road or parking lot is essential. That they are in absolute wilderness, that they are not in some theme park. In all the years I have been in the woods, I know enough to pay attention and make plenty of noise, I have had very few encounters with bears, that concerned me or the bear(s)..

As for the NPS wanting a south visitor center, let them us their own park land..

As for recreational mine, contact the local GPAA chapter, they would be more then happy to give input, since they have claims at the end of the Petersville Road. (Tom Ireland/[tandmireland@gci.net](mailto:tandmireland@gci.net) or Bonnie Tishler/[www.alaskagolddiggers.org](http://www.alaskagolddiggers.org))

NOTE: NOTES RECORDED BY ANDRE KAEPPLE, SNOTRAC  
COORDINATOR. UNDERLINED TEXT ARE COMMENTS  
SUBMITTED BY GLENN SWAN, NOVEMBER 16, 2009

Andre, I have just a few comments on your take of our meeting, most was right on, I don't want to put words in your mouth but some needs to be addressed.

Glenn(with 2 n's) Swan

**Denali State Park Trail Management Plan Scoping Meeting**  
**Campbell Creek Science Center (Anchorage)**  
**Thursday November 6, 2009: 7-9 p.m.**

My discussions at the meetings were almost exclusively with the winter motorized interest group. I spoke with Glen(n) Swan (president of the Curry Ridge Riders), Joe Guana (vice president of the Curry Ridge Riders and SnowTRAC board member), Gary ?? (Alaska Moose Federation), and Wayne Biessel (MatSu Superintendent).

The number one most important issue for the winter motorized contingent is ACCESS. They want to preserve their existing access to the entire State Park. Their next most important issue is the MP 121 trailhead. (That's not what I said, (as I stated below) If you cant keep it maintained now how are you going to maintain anything new?) They would like to see state parks actively maintain this trailhead facility to a greater degree. ( We could use more parking and the ability to use the out houses) Also of high importance for the group is restoring the historical Curry Ridge Lookout structure. If ignored they feel the structure will completely fall apart within the next couple of years. An additional novel idea presented by the group is to place a number of "Wanigans" (portable cabins on skis) along popular snowmobile routes for rent by the public.

The access issue has been fundamental to the formation of the Curry Ridge Riders Snowmobile Club. They have a long history of defending their access to Denali State Park, namely during Jim Stratton's administration in which the DPOR attempted to limit their access to the Curry Ridge area. They feel that they have a greater interest in the area than

the non-motorized contingent. As Glen(n) Swan put it "in my twenty years of riding on Curry Ridge only once have I seen a skier, and they were following a snowmachine track." Additionally they feel that is not democratic (fare) to restrict motorized access to a non-motorized area, but not restrict non-motorized access to a motorized area (i.e. skiers on the north loop trail). (You missed the point, the point is we build trails that are open to everyone but state parks feels that if its a ski trail only they can use it so why? (as the question was ask) don't they say the same to them? but most important we don't believe in that! are trails are open to ALL) I tried to relay the importance of a natural setting to the non-motorized user, and their desire for a quite natural setting. The response I received is that from the majority of the Curry and K'esugi ridge area the parks highway can be heard, (Also remember the Rail Road runs down the East side) thus eliminating that argument. I relayed the importance of a natural snow setting (i.e. limited tracks) for the non-motorized user. The response I received is that most skiers they have seen in the area use snowmobile trails because they are nicer to use for skiers. ( Also if they would travel away from the trail system you can still find untracked snow) I discussed the Chugach National Forest model of shared access (i.e. Turnagain Pass and Resurrection Pass Trail); different areas are available to different users or the same area is available to different users during different times of year. Their group was intensely involved in that planning process and were not happy with the results. The only type of shared use I could get the group to somewhat agree upon is that of sharing winters. In this example an area is non-motorized for half the winter season and motorized for the other half. Each winter the time allocated to each user group would alternate. For example during the first winter the first half would be motorized and they second half would be non-motorized. During the second winter the opposite would occur (1<sup>st</sup> half non-motorized, 2<sup>nd</sup> half motorized). But the only way this would be agreeable to them would be if the motorized time period would restrict non-motorized use. ( Again we said that was one of the sugestions , we dont like it. Also you forgot to mention that they get it right now! and up untill it opens to motorised use,and at the end of the season when its closed. So if you add it up we are already on a time share system only thing is they get it the whole time) Additionally, the indicated the north part of K'esugi Ridge near Indian Mt as a potential permanently non-motorized area. (Don't know where you got that? but the north end of theKesugi Ridge has a major I mean MAJOR snow machine trail trough it that accesses the community of Chulitna and the winter trails east of there. To encumber it with a non motorized label will be rout with complications for those that use that to access their cabins , not a good idea.)

The MP 121 parking lot is the trailhead for the Chulitna Bluff and East-West Express groomed winter trails. Although no(t) within the state park, this trailhead parking area is maintained under a MOU between DOT and DPOR. According to the Curry Ridge Riders (CRR), this trailhead is severely neglected by the DPOR. Although DOT consistently plows the area, DPOR does not consistently maintain the picnic tables and latrines at the site. With more than a hundred people using this facility during a typical weekend, the CRR feel that more maintenance is necessary. Other trailheads with inadequate facilities include the 127 and 131 trailheads which lack latrines or garbage cans, resulting in a mess. The lack of maintenance and appearance of these sites has resulted in vandalism to vehicles parked at

the trailheads. (You forgot to mention that we used this as a question as to "you are not maintaining what is already built, so how are you going to maintain a new structure and what else is going to not be maintained at the cost of the new structure")

Built around 1924 the Curry Lookout (originally called Regalvista) sits at about 2600 feet on Curry Ridge. The structure was part of a Hotel resort area along the AKRR at Curry. In addition to the hotel and lookout, there was a suspension bridge over the Susitna River and a 5 mile trail (the Meadow Lake Trail) to the lookout. The CRR feel that this historic structure is important to the identity of the area and should be preserved. They have taken the initiative to do minor repairs in the past because "parks said they were going to fix it but never did". They would like to see parks completely restore the structure to its historical state in the 20's. A couple of ideas were to build geodesic dome around it to preserve it, or take the original down and build a replica (the original structure would be on display at the visitor center). (I actually like this idea) In any case the CRR feel that if the structure is ignored much longer it will fall to the ground.

A suggestion was made to install Wanigan's along the winter snowmobile trail system. These structures would be hauled into the park on skis by the area groomer during the winter, and removed in late spring. The public could rent the structure for a fee thus extending their time in the park for recreational activities. Structures could be moved to desired locations based on the use of the public. (You forgot to say that the CRR would also make some money off of the Wanigans) Another suggestion was to put a permanent PUC along the Tokositna River to be used in the summer by boaters and in the winter by snowmobilers. This could be a potential revenue source for the Park and the CRR feel they would get a substantial amount of use.

Towards the end of the meeting I had a discussion with Gary from the Moose Federation. Their role is to use heavy equipment to clear moose habitat parallel to the highway corridor to help reduce the number of moose-vehicle interactions along the Parks Highway. Although they stay within the DOT ROW, their activity occurs within the park and may affect the wildlife resource (in a positive way). They are, in a sense, building moose trails.

Finally I had an in depth discussion with Glen about how snowmobilers use the park. He identified some of the more popular routes, and they are displayed in the accompanying map. Of particular interest is how they access Curry Ridge. There are three major access points, and one minor access point. The major access points are near the southern boundary of the park and include Troublesome Creek Trailhead, the Blair Lake Boy Scout Camp, and a homestead east of there (Sunny's) of which they have permission to use. The minor access point is the Byers Lake Trailhead which is used to access the Susitna River. They would like to see the troublesome creek trailhead plowed out better. At this point it only can accommodate about three vehicles in the winter, while many more attempt to use it and end up parking in the road corridor, creating a safety hazard.

In closing I would like to say it would be nice if SP would go into this with an open mind and not any preconceptions that there will be conflicts. Why can we start with a clean slate? set down make some plans together and see where we end up, it always seems that the solution is to restrict us. We already operate under guide line from SP and that should be all that's needed. Maybe we could send something to King, Wain, you ,me, Randy ,Joe ,and any other players that have a steak in this dissections, have a couple meeting and come up with a workable solution that is FARE to both side taking into account all things like shoulder seasons and the like and come up with a plan we all can agree on.

Glenn Swan

# WOHVA



October 30, 2009

Alaska Department of Natural Resources  
Claire Holland LeClair, Project Leader  
550 West 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Suite 1260  
Anchorage, AK 99501-3557

Subject: Denali State Park Trail Management Plan Comments

Dear Ms LeClair,

I am writing on behalf of WOHVA (Wisconsin Off-Highway Vehicle Association) to express our comments on your Denali State Park Trail Management Plan.

WOHVA is an umbrella organization representing motorized recreationists from the ATV, OHM and 4WD communities here in the Badger State. Collectively, WOHVA represents over 1000 Off-Highway Vehicle enthusiasts.

Motorized recreation is the fastest growing type of recreational activity in the country and WOHVA appreciates the stress that this growth is putting on the roads and trails in all of our National Forests. WOHVA encourages all OHV enthusiasts to recreate responsibly and enjoy the great outdoors. This increase in use has put additional congestion on already crowded roads & trails.

With this additional and growing demand for motorized recreational opportunities, WOHVA does not support any Forest Travel Management Plan which does not list as an alternative the expansion (yielding a Forest wide net increase) of motorized recreational riding opportunities.

WOHVA encourages the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to work with motorized recreational groups to develop a partnership with these groups. It is our belief that by working with motorized recreational volunteer



groups the DNR can find solutions to some of their financial and budgetary restrictions.

Thank you for your time and I am available to answer any questions the DNR may have. Feel free to contact me on this and any other issue which involves OHV recreation.

Happy Trails,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John G Schnorr', with a stylized, cursive style.

John G Schnorr  
Executive Director  
Wisconsin Off-Highway Vehicle Association  
P.O. Box 1865  
Fond du Lac, WI 54936-1865  
ceo@WOHVA.com

Mission Statement

The Wisconsin Off-Highway Vehicle Association exists for the sole purpose of proactively assuring that public and private off-highway motorized vehicular recreational opportunities are expanded in Wisconsin for safe use by this and future generations.

## Leclair, Claire H (DNR)

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**From:** comoxjd@gci.net on behalf of judith anderegg [comoxjd@gci.net]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 28, 2009 9:42 AM  
**To:** Leclair, Claire H (DNR)  
**Subject:** re: Denali State Park Trail plans

Claire -

We will be out of town during the series of upcoming open houses to discuss trail development in Denali State Park and are disappointed that we will not be able to attend. We are very interested in being kept informed of any plans for Denali State Park.

I was the chair of the Denali State Park Advisory Board for its first six years of existence. My husband and I built a cabin in 1985 just outside the south side of the park. We spend time out there on a regular basis throughout the year. Over the years, we have seen an incredible amount of destruction by ATVs throughout the area - both outside and inside the park. If you have not flown over the region, we urge you to do at least one fly over so that you are able to comprehend the amount of destruction of habitat that has been created by motorized traffic on the ground - some of it motorized traffic too late/too early by snowmachines but most of it by ATVs, fourwheelers, etc. in summer and fall. You could also speak with any number of the pilots who fly the area, who could also address this issue.

We are 8 miles off the road through miles of boggy muskeg. Both from the air and on the ground, we have seen the results of ATV traffic - the gaping holes that have been torn into the fragile ground cover, the long gashes by tracks cut when machines sink in. When we first built out there, we thought we would only be dealing with winter motorized traffic. Several years ago during a relatively dry summer, we met up with our first four wheeler out near our cabin!

As private landowners, we have watched an incredible increase in motorized traffic in our area, we do not want to see that increase because DNR/DPOR decides to develop a trail system in the state park which they do not have the manpower to manage and control.

We would propose that DNR/DPOR ban the use of ATVS in Denali State Park because of the amount of damage in the area, however, if that is not possible please look at the questions we ask below.

We would like to see DNR/DPOR address the following questions in making plans for trails:

1. Are you considering the possibility of no motorized vehicles - ATVs, snowmachines, four wheelers in Denali State Park?
2. Are you planning on establishing both motorized and nonmotorized areas?
3. If you establish both types of areas, will you be able to mandate the use of motorized versus nonmotorized areas?
4. If you are able to mandate motorized versus nonmotorized areas, will you have ENOUGH rangers to patrol and enforce these areas year round?
5. Since some of the damage has already been done, can you look at areas in the park that already have trails and incorporate them into your plans rather than ignoring them - even if they are not perfect?

ATVs are everywhere. Please do not plan trails and development in the park that you can NOT manage and protect. It is heartbreaking to fly over the area and see all the trails cut into the muskeg which we know will not recover in our lifetime. The wildlife and habitat in the area are paying a price already - please do not make it worse.

If you do not have/will not have money to manage and enforce what you plan, please leave it in its undeveloped status. That in itself does control to some degree how it is used.

Judith Anderegg and David Pelto

## Leclair, Claire H (DNR)

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**From:** comoxjd@gci.net on behalf of judith anderegg [comoxjd@gci.net]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 28, 2009 11:16 AM  
**To:** Leclair, Claire H (DNR)  
**Subject:** re: Trails in Denali State Park

Claire -

I just got your email and a couple of things have been pointed out to me since I sent you the email this morning:

1. that winter use in the park by motorized vehicles is allowed but that summer ATV use is prohibited.
2. DNR(through DLWM?) is responsible for management of the state land I was referring to south of the park, but not DPOR

I appreciate your speedy response and wanted to say a little bit more of what we perceive as happening in the area that gives us concern about a trail plan for Denali State Park. (I should also say that we believe philosophically that parks do need trail plans but in this case we feel there is a bigger problem in the area that has to be addressed first.

We want you to know that we do know that DPOR is not responsible for management of the area south of the park, but rather another division within DNR is. We brought it up because such misuse as happens already on nonpark lands is likely to flow over on to adjoining park lands(if it is not already doing so), if trails are established and not adequately patrolled within the park.

Our concern is that - no matter which Division is responsible for the management - south of the park is being trashed by ATVs and such misuse could overflow onto Denali State Park. (Maybe it already is.) We feel that motorized off-road use should be controlled throughout the area. It may seem that south of the park is not your problem. But if the general motorized off-road public is already using land close to and over the boundary of the state park not realizing that they are not allowed and if trails are established and not adequately patrolled, the motorized public will expand their use of those as well even if prohibited (your problem)

As we said above, we are well aware that DPOR does not manage that area south of the park but perhaps DPOR could/should work with its sister division to establish adequate controls over motorized offroad vehicles throughout the area for sake of habitat, wildlife, human residents, and other users. Our concern is that by putting trails in the park unless well planned, well financed and well managed that it will make it way too easy for the park to be over-run by motorized traffic(like the adjoining areas already are) and extend the already existing conflict between motorized and nonmotorized users.

We appreciate your quick response to our email and your adding us to your email list.

Judith Anderegg and David Pelto

**Comments recorded by Heather Rice, NPS-RTCA, during November 3-5  
Community Meetings on Denali State Park Trail Management Plan. (Some  
comments are repeated under multiple headings.)**

**Snow Trail Ideas/Issues**

- Look at South Side Denali Implementation Plan DEIS for public comments for key information on resources and trails in DSP. For example, there were some ideas for Troublesome Creek and what to do about bear issues there.
- ATV and snowmachining sales are increasing; therefore need serious attention paid to building new trails. Can't shut trails down as it would just push people onto the fewer trails that are left and create more use on those trails. More use could create a safety issue.
- Motorized use (winter/summer): identify what's closed by regulation and what's inaccessible due to natural barriers?
- Consider corridors of snowmachine use so people know if they go outside or beyond the corridor it'll be quiet.
- A give before a take – for example, provide snowmachine trail access through/around a physical barrier (like through a forest to an open area) in “exchange” for allowing some areas to be closed to snowmachines.
- A seasonal closure to snowmachine use is “better” than closing an area every other year. If seasonal closure, make it an early season closure because late season is when there's enough snow to ride and to adequately protect vegetation.

**Terra (Land) Trail Ideas/Issues**

- Look at South Side Denali Implementation Plan DEIS for public comments for key information on resources and trails in DSP. For example, there were some ideas for Troublesome Creek and what to do about bear issues there.
- Lower end of Troublesome Creek – The trail would be safer up on the hill, yes, but what is the point of the trail if it's not along the Creek? Need to suss out the treasures to connect. Primary reason the trail was special was it tied together treasures like the balanced rock pool and the big granite rock. Could have seasonal closures along the Creek to deal with bear issue. Maintaining this trail will require a couple brushings a summer. (Dave Johnston)
- DSP has a long established tradition of being a hiking park; don't want to see ATVs.
- Princess Lodge horse trail is a mess due to horses punching through the turf. Would take a huge hardening effort to make this trail sustainable. Question whether there's an official permit for the trail.
- See regulations for horses in DSP – they are allowed but not on trails (so then they create their own trails).
- There are old mining roads inside the park.
- Put in a hiking (?) trail from the new South Side Visitor Center to Byers Lake.
- Put in a trail along the old construction road that parallels the highway from Mary Cary's to Byer's Lake. Provide trail access every 3 miles or so. This trail will provide hiking opportunities to those who are unable or don't want to use more difficult trails.

Could also have an overlook (?) at the MP 138 gravel pit with a trail to the Chulitna River. (Paul Nangle)

- ATV and snowmachining sales are increasing; therefore need serious attention paid to building new trails. Can't shut trails down as it would just push people onto the fewer trails that are left and create more use on those trails. More use could create a safety issue.
- Why not have ATV trails in DSP, especially for hunting and if the ATV has low psi (low impact). Need more areas to hunt because our population is increasing.
- Motorized use (winter/summer): identify what's closed by regulation and what's inaccessible due to natural barriers?

### **Water Trail Ideas/Issues**

- Popular pack raft trip – Long Point to Home Lake and out Tokositna to Chulitna with take out at the bridge. Safety issues - some hydraulics at the confluence of Tokositna and Chulitna, plus eddy lines. Could create a “chicken out” route at the eddy line and avoid the hydraulics.

### **Natural Resources**

- Bear dens and other critical habitat (e.g., moose calving) exist throughout DSP. (Billy Fitzgerald will mark up map showing known locations.)
- Look at South Side Denali Implementation Plan DEIS for public comments for key information on resources and trails in DSP. For example, there were some ideas for Troublesome Creek and what to do about bear issues there.

### **Management Actions**

- Additional coordination between AK State Parks and others is needed to create a great trail system.
- Don't close a trail if you can't improve or fix it right away; just leave it open until money is available to fix it.
- Be clear about motorized rules – some people don't snowmachine in DSP because they don't know what can/can't be done and don't want to chance doing something illegal. Need to have clear boundaries for motorized areas (topographically based).
- Need to be clear about regulations. Don't put them just on the website, but also post them at trailheads and on-site. This way if someone's driving down the road and decides to stop at DSP spur-of-the-moment, they'll be able to read at the trailhead what's allowed and not allowed.

### **Community Outreach**

- Host a meeting near Denali National Park in the late spring/summer to capture the seasonals and others in that area who also recreate in DSP.
- Open house format doesn't work well for public meetings. Instead have a facilitated discussion, with a presentation setting the stage (rules, objectives, context). Always have an agenda. A facilitated discussion is a creative format that would bring out everyone's ideas and let other people hear and react to other perspectives. Small group break-out sessions also would work.

- The proposed Denali Visitor Center should be identified on the DSP park maps (or at least a circle around the general vicinity).

**Misc Information**

- The Alaska Rail Road is planning to build a hotel just outside Denali State Park (DSP), with trails and a tram into DSP. They also have a 100-year gravel extraction plan for the 5000 acres they own near Curry. (Billy Fitzgerald: [info@alaskahiking.com](mailto:info@alaskahiking.com))
- The trails in DSP Trails Mgt Plan need to match those described in the South Side Plan (or at least not conflict).
- Staffing needs to be part of the plan.
- What does “more trails” mean on the ground? Is there a formula for determining this?

RS2477 route exists from Curry to Curry Ridge. Need to flag and maintain this; maybe make it a designated trail. (There's a book about Curry's history that identifies this route; should look at this.)