

STATE OF ALASKA

SEAN PARNELL, Governor

ANILCA IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM Office of Project Management and Permitting

550 W. 7TH AVENUE, SUITE 1430
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501
PH: (907) 269-7529 / FAX: (907) 269-5673
susan.magee@alaska.gov

April 16, 2012

Mr. Rick Obernesser, Superintendent
Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve
U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service
P.O. Box 439
Copper Center, AK 99573-0439

Dear Mr. Obernesser:

The State of Alaska reviewed the environmental assessment (EA) for a proposed extension to the Devils Mountain Lodge airstrip within Wrangell-St. Elias National Preserve. This letter contains the consolidated views of the State's resource agencies.

We support the proposed action alternative to issue a Right-of-Way Certificate of Access to the Ellis Family Homestead, consistent with the provisions of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act Section 1110(b), which states:

Notwithstanding any other provisions of this Act or other law, in any case in which ... privately owned land ... is effectively surrounded by one or more conservation system units ..., the ... private property owner or occupier shall be given by the Secretary such rights as may be necessary to assure adequate and feasible access for economic and other purposes.

In addition to providing needed inholder access, extending the Devils Mountain Lodge Airstrip will improve safety, allow for larger aircraft, and facilitate visitor services and administrative activities by providing greater flexibility for accessing remote locations in the park and preserve.

The amount of land affected by the proposed action is negligible in relation to the overall amount of federal public land in the park and the preserve. In addition, the affected land is adjacent to a road and developed private property. The impacts to visual, vegetative, and soils resources may be minor while construction is occurring; however, the perceived impacts post construction would be negligible as the airstrip extensions would appear to be a part of the original homestead. In addition, the project area is a hub for visitors chartering commercial aircraft and it is therefore unlikely that either end of this frequently used airstrip is highly utilized habitat for the species listed in the EA.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. If you have questions, please contact me at (907) 269-7529.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Magee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of the first name being a large, stylized 'S'.

Susan Magee
ANILCA Program Coordinator