

# STATE OF ALASKA

WALTER J. HICKEL, GOVERNOR

## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET  
DIVISION OF GOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

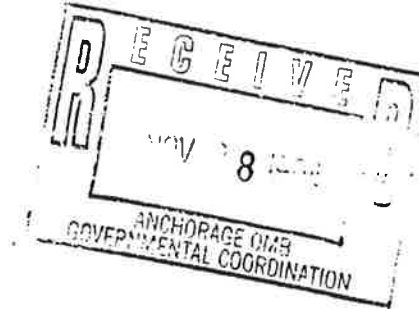
SOUTH CENTRAL REGIONAL OFFICE  
3601 "C" STREET, SUITE 370  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99503-5930  
PH: (907) 561-6131/FAX: (907) 561-6134

CENTRAL OFFICE  
P.O. BOX 110030  
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-0300  
PH: (907) 465-3562/FAX: (907) 465-3075

PIPELINE COORDINATOR'S OFFICE  
411 WEST 4TH AVENUE, SUITE 2C  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501-2343  
PH: (907) 278-8594/FAX: (907) 272-0690

November 25, 1994

National Park System Advisory Board  
ATTN: Loren Croxton  
c/o National Park Service  
2525 Gambell Street, Suite 107  
Anchorage, AK 99503



Dear Mr. Croxton:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Denali Task Force Report. The State of Alaska has a great interest and stake in issues concerning visitor use and development in and around Denali National Park and Preserve. Several members of the task force represented state agencies. For the record, this administration wishes to clarify its views on several topics, including the three issues upon which the task force was unable to reach agreement.

### Recommendation #7 Kantishna Airstrip

The State of Alaska claims ownership to the Kantishna Airport. With that ownership goes the right and responsibility to maintain the airport. The task force was aware of this claim, and the ownership of the airport was not made an issue. The State supports the continued use of the airport, and is currently working on an airport master plan that will require coordination with the National Park Service (NPS). If expanding use warrants safety upgrades beyond those possible at the present location, the State would work with the NPS to relocate the airport.

### Recommendation #8 Subsistence Use in the Kantishna Area

The Denali Task Force was not charged with addressing subsistence issues. The application of existing statutory and regulatory processes should guide subsistence management on federal lands. Expertise on the task force concerning subsistence provisions of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act and regulations, and the federal and state customary and traditional use determination processes, was therefore not adequate to make recommendations on this subject. For example, it is appropriate for the NPS to recommend discussion of this topic by the Subsistence Resource Commission (SRC), but not to direct the SRC to meet specifically for this purpose. Furthermore, the State agrees with the accompanying minority statement. It would not be productive to use this issue to open a subsistence debate in Congress.

### Existing Park Road

The State of Alaska also asserts ownership of the Denali Park Road from the George Parks Highway to Kantishna. Since this is a legal issue, the task force did not address this as a matter of consensus or agreement; although the task force acknowledged the jurisdictional question.

### Recommendation #31 New North Route to Kantishna

As recognized in the report, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities is preparing an environmental impact statement addressing surface transportation to the upper Kuskokwim Valley, including a link to Kantishna. The State believes that sufficient demand exists for new access into Denali National Park to warrant this study. The EIS will contain the proposed, privately-funded railroad as a separate alternative. This administration endorses the minority opinion on this topic which states that new access into the national park is necessary to take pressure off the existing park road and protect its outstanding wildlife resources.

### Recommendation #22 South Side Visitor Facilities

The State of Alaska is pleased with the Denali Task Force's comprehensive approach to recreation use and development on the south side. Such a comprehensive approach has been long overdue. The State is particularly interested in pursuing carefully-planned, cooperative development opportunities recommended for the Tokositna site. This site offers an outstanding new visitor attraction from an existing state right-of-way that can be developed with minimal impacts to the scenic and wildlife resources of the state and national parks.

### Recommendation #39 Denali Coordinating Committee

The State strongly concurs with the task force's conclusion that an on-going cooperative forum will be necessary for future planning and implementation of the report's recommendations.

While the State of Alaska does not support each and every recommendation in the Denali Task Force Report, the task force process has nonetheless provided a valuable forum for dialogue on numerous long-standing and difficult issues. The number and scope of recommendations which reached consensus illustrate that considerable progress was made. The State is ready to work with the NPS, other landowners and the public in implementing those recommendations which best serve the public interest.

Sincerely,



Paul C. Rusanowski, Ph.D.  
Director

Distribution List  
State response to Denali Task Force Report  
November 28, 1994

*Tina Cunning, Department of Fish & Game, Anchorage*

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*Stan Leaphart, Citizens Advisory Commission on Federal Areas, Fairbanks*

*Members, Denali Task Force*