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August 14, 1995

Mr. Robert Barbee
Field Director
National Park Service
2525 Gambell Street, Room 104
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Mr. Barbee: 

The State of Alaska has reviewed the supplemental draft Development Concept Plan for the Brooks River area within the Katmai National Park and Preserve. This letter represents the consolidated comments of the State's resource agencies. In preparing these comments, state agencies also consulted with the Bristol Bay Native Corporation (BBNC), which has been instrumental in facilitating valuable dialogue on Brooks River management issues.

The State commends the National Park Service, particularly Superintendent Bill Pierce, for the time and effort expended in working with the spectrum of interested parties. As a result, the new alternative 5 is a great improvement over previous alternatives. Our comments are limited to facility development plans in the preferred alternative. State resource agencies have not identified significant concerns with these facilities. Given the new direction in the preferred alternative, we offer the following comments.

First, the State is interested in working cooperatively with the NPS on the specific operational aspects of bear viewing at Brooks River. The Governor is generally supportive of enhancing the potential for bear viewing in Alaska as a component of his Trails and Recreational Access for Alaska (TRAAK) initiative. Given the growing popularity of bear viewing at Katmai, the State's longstanding role at McNeil River, and interest in fostering bear viewing opportunities in other areas of the state under various jurisdictions, it would be valuable to share insights and explore common principles.

By the same token, the State's management authorities concerning fisheries must be acknowledged in the plan, including the role of the Board of Fisheries in setting season and bag limits and establishing closures. These are not discretionary actions of the National Park Service, and the NPS must work with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and the Board of Fisheries on any desired modifications to fishing rules. Historically, there have been relatively few conflicts between fishing and bears, although as public visitation increases DFG stands ready to jointly evaluate the plan's proposed modifications.

In light of the DCP's Beaver Pond Terrace proposals, we agree with the views of participating local interests that other parts of Naknek Lake and the gateway communities of King Salmon and Naknek have not received the attention they deserve. New Brooks Camp facilities and an increased partnership with the gateway communities need not be mutually exclusive. If limited funding is the key constraint, then perhaps the Brooks Camp facilities could be streamlined or scaled back somewhat to help fund other facilities which serve the park.

The State concurs with BBNC that it may be possible to slightly increase day use with more structured management. The popularity of this area necessitates that the NPS look for ways to maximize day use without jeopardizing the bears. On the other hand, the plan should insure that visitors to other areas of the park, such as the Valley of 10,000 Smokes, are not unnecessarily constrained by bear viewing restrictions.

The State also supports BBNC's interests concerning cultural resources. The outstanding opportunities for cultural interpretation are not sufficiently recognized. An increased emphasis on cultural resources provides the NPS with unique opportunities to enter into mutually beneficial partnerships with local organizations.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. If you have questions, please call me at 269-7477.

Sincerely,



Sally Gibert
State CSU Coordinator

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