

Summary of Scoping Comments  
Denali State Park Trail Management Plan  
Prepared by: Claire Holland LeClair, Project Leader

**NOTE:** For complete text of all scoping comments received through 12/15/09, go to:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/plans/denali/denaliscopingcomment.pdf>

The following are unedited selections from scoping comments received through 12/15/09. The headings they are organized under are from the Denali State Park Trail Management Plan questionnaire (<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/plans/denali/scopingquestionnaire.pdf>).

This summary is intended to communicate the similarities and the variety within the comments received. However, readers are encouraged to look through the full text of all scoping comments (see link above).

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

“Park managers should look for examples of cooperation and not segregation.”

“Motorized vs. non-motorized winter use”

“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.”

“It is important to plan for future trails, but improving the quality of the existing trails should be a priority.”

“Establish criteria for what is considered overuse.”

“Begin ASAP a comprehensive study of DSP natural resources, including natural ecosystems and landscape features.”

“Assess need for future trails & reroutes. Do not build until need is established and impacts weighed. What is gained? What is lost?”

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

“DPOR needs to develop a way to monitor snow depth and conditions, especially on Curry-Kesugi Ridge when high winds blow the snow away.”

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

“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.”

### **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."

"In the winter, I like to mush on a traditional trail...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."

"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."

"Alaska is one of the few places where you find the best spots by studying a topo map and using a compass."

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

"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."

"They allow me to access a beautiful area, and provide me with opportunities to view stunning landscapes and various wildlife, exercise is an added bonus, but not the sole reason I use the trails."

"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."

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

### **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!"

"The highest priority for trail improvements should be the existing trails."

"Any new trails developed should be multiuse 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."

"The first priority should be to take care of the existing trails...The second highest priority should be obtaining funding for enough park rangers to manage the trails...The third highest priority should be to provide winter trails for non-motorized users."

"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)."

"First and foremost, the Park must have someone dedicated full time in the summer that is charge of working on it's trails."

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

"Kesugi Ridge. The trails have become very popular, but are now in danger of being degraded by overuse."

“The trail from Byers Lake to Kesugi Ridge needs to be improved—sustainable with switchbacks to limit grade.”

“Trails and trailheads along the Parks Highway need to be upgraded. The Curry and Kesugi Ridge trail systems should be built up to sustainable trail parameter standards, and maintained at a level that meets the projected increase in use.”

“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.”

“Troublesome Creek.”

### **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.”

“Providing public access does not mean unfettered access. Access means reasonable access, in consideration of the natural resources of the Park and avoiding conflicts among user groups.”

“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...not the experience I am looking for.”

“West of the Chulitna River..We have a quasi-accessible wilderness there...there are high concentrations of brown bears.”

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

“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.”

“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.”

“Avoid placing trails where bears eat—keep them away from salmon streams.”

“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.”

### **Please describe any specific trails you would like to see improved or developed.**

“The creation or extension of existing trails for vehicles with low ground pressure (within the park boundary west of the Parks Highway).”

“I would like to see a multi use/season backbone trail go from the south end to the north end of the park.”

“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.”

“Seasonal bike path parallel to Parks Highway, MP 132-169...A bike path could serve bikers in summer, snowmachiners in winter. The paved trail should be located between Parks Highway and Chulitna River, at least 300’ from the highway, hidden by forest buffer when possible.”

“I would like to see some kind of fishing access trail restored along Upper Troublesome Creek.”

“From Long Point to Home Lake. This is becoming popular among packrafters and should be identified and considered in the management plan.”

“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.”

“I would 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.”

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

“By encouraging sharing and good behavior.”

“I feel with the right approach and a lot of patience, park staff can develop a trail plan that will please most folks without closing any of the park to snowmobile use.”

“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.”

“By mature communication, each side trying to understand the desires of the other side.”

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

“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.”

“Clearly demark and enforce non-motorized use.”

“Education!! Signage showing before and after pictures and a heavy TV/radio blitz pre-hunting season.”

“To consider that some of the trails can be used by snowmachiners in winter and hikers in the summer.”

“...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.”

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

“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.)”

“Popular campsites should have constructed (dirt or wood) tent sites.”

“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.”

“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.”

“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.”

“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.”

“Actions that would result in increased in motorized activity should be balanced with measures to increase opportunities for high quality non-motorized recreation.”

“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.”

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

“The plan should consider what the carrying capacity of trails are.”

“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.”

“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.”

“Call boxes campsites are some of my ideas every 10 20 miles something for hikers or back wood travelers.”

“Continued prohibition of motorized traffic in summer. Snow machining OK with adequate snow cover. Snow cover probably never adequate on the ridge.”

“We could use more parking and the ability to use the out houses.”

“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.”