

## Chapter Two

# *Vision and Goals for Facility Development*

**South Denali Visitor Center Complex: Interpretive Master Plan**





Visitors take in the interpretation at the Denali View South Viewpoint. August, 2007

## Vision and Goals

### Denali State Park Management Plan Vision Statement (2006)

The 2006 management plan documents the vision of the Alaska DNR Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation for the South Denali Visitor Center Complex (page 81). This plan adopts the overall recommendations of the Final South Denali Implementation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement:

*This destination facility will serve Alaskan and out-of-state travelers, local school groups and package tours. The vision is for a high quality facility that offers a range of opportunities for learning and recreating. It will provide visitors of various abilities a chance to experience alpine and subarctic tundra environments and opportunities to view Denali and the Alaska Range.*

*The visitor center and trail system could engage visitors for an hour, half-day or all day. Diverse opportunities (such as interpretation of natural and cultural resources, viewing Denali, short walks, long hikes, educational programs, hands-on exhibits and viewing films) and information about regional recreational opportunities, safety, and emergency assistance will be provided to accommodate diverse visitor interests and backgrounds. Opportunities for winter activities will be provided, though not at the same level of service as in summer.*

### Memorandum of Understanding Vision Statement (July 2007)

The Memorandum of Understanding for Development of the South Denali Master Interpretive Plan (July 2007) states the vision for the visitor center:

*The South Denali Visitor Center will be a sustainable learning and recreation gateway, providing a welcoming and accessible interpretive transition for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. The visitor center, trails, and viewing areas will be unimposing and harmoniously nestled within the surrounding landscape, furnishing venues for education, study, and wildlife and scenic viewing. Heritage interpretation will enhance visitor appreciation of, connection to, and care for area resources by offering an interactive program focusing on the key themes of transition, sustainable resource management, recreation, earth processes, and natural and cultural history. This year-round gathering place will enable visitors to experience migrating and resident wildlife, breathtaking views of Denali and the Alaska Range, and Alaskan nights painted with sheets of dancing aurora. Visitors will come to experience and stay to enjoy.*

## Visioning Workshop

To establish a clear direction for the visitor center project, a visioning workshop was held on August 16, 2007 with a cross section of project stakeholders. The purpose of the workshop was to determine:

- Specific goals of the project (reported below)
- Target and potential audiences (reported in Chapter 3)
- Important stories to be told (incorporated in Chapter 4, themes and messages)
- Development and activities that should and should not be planned for the facilities (incorporated in Chapters 5-7)

A full list of results from the meeting is included in **Appendix 1**. Workshop participants included representatives from the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, National Park Service, Denali Concessions, and private businesses.

### Specific Goals of the Project

Numbers represent weighting by participants based on their perceived importance.

1. Demonstrate commitment to stewardship (Green architecture and development through LEED certification, alternative fuels, view shed preservation) (17)
2. Emphasize active use of Denali State Park through outdoor recreational activities. Provide information/infrastructure for recreational activities. Provide indoor hands-on media designed for multi-generational visitors with diverse abilities (15)
3. Incorporate a wide variety of viewpoints of the resource and facilitate understanding between user groups (10)
4. Exploit multi-modal opportunities (9)
5. Celebrate the stunning natural setting. People come for the view of Denali and landscape—emphasize view (8)
6. Connect cultural and recreational resources with the natural resources—celebrate community heritage. Connect local communities to the area—get communities involved along with tourists (8)
7. Make an education connection with local youth (7)
8. South Denali should release pressure from Denali NP, promote economic growth of communities and enhance the scenic byways experience (6)
9. Connect the people of Anchorage and communities north to year-round recreation and enjoyment (5)
10. Access and facilitate responsible use of resources- promote resource protection (5)
11. Make this a destination facility (5)
12. Promote casual enjoyment, affordable activities that people want (4)
13. Interpret stories that other centers have not addressed (mountains) (4)
14. Promote appreciation for the South Denali region and its unique natural resources (3)
15. Provide a central axis point for multiple agency land management cooperation (2)
16. Make a strong connection to the environment and environmental changes in the area (2)







Community meeting in Anchorage. November, 2007



## Community Meetings

In November, 2007, information gathering sessions were held in Anchorage, Wasilla and Trapper Creek. The planning team recorded responses to the following questions:

1. What stories would you share with an out-of-town visitor? (About your community? About Curry Ridge and this region?)
2. What effects do you foresee the South Denali facility having on the region, your community, or Curry Ridge? (Potential benefits? Concerns?)
3. How can the South Denali facility be developed to benefit Alaska residents? (Specific features of the visitor center? Specific features of the site?)
4. What/who are some resources that we can investigate or interview to learn more about this area?

Complete responses to these questions are reported in **Appendix 2**.

### Summary of Community Meetings

A review of the comments provides insights into the vision and concerns of local and regional citizens for the South Denali project:

- Anticipate and mitigate impacts to the alpine flora and wildlife. Conduct biological inventories and monitor wildlife (important area for bears and moose).
- All development should be sensitive to the viewshed and tranquility of the site and minimize environmental impact. Shuttle to the top strongly supported.
- Avoid “glitter gulch” developments along the Parks Highway.
- Minimize recreational impacts on Curry Ridge from trampling and motorized vehicles (strong consensus to restrict snow machine use to other areas).
- Provide non-motorized shoulder season and winter use of the facilities and site by locals and schools.
- Interpret local history (Town of Curry, railroad, indigenous Athabaskans, mountaineering, aviation, mining, homesteading, Parks Highway).
- Interpret the ecological and geological history and geomorphology.
- The center and trails will be an important recreational resource for Alaska residents and should be designed to meet their needs as well as out-of-state visitors.