

## Scoping Newsletter

### What is the Implementation Plan?

Public input and participation are key to the success of this planning process. Before we begin drafting the environmental impact statement and implementation plan, we want to hear from you!

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*For this planning effort, South Denali is defined to include the Petersville Road corridor, the western section of Denali State Park, the Peters Hills, and the local communities.*

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The South Denali Implementation Plan is a collaborative effort between the National Park Service, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and the State of Alaska to enhance recreational and access opportunities throughout the south Denali region for the benefit of a wide variety of visitors including Alaskans, independent travelers, and package tour travelers. The goals of the plan are to provide a quality visitor experience while protecting resource values and quality of life for residents in nearby communities. The interagency planning team is gathering information during this scoping process to

draft a South Denali Implementation Plan.

### Why is development proposed in the South Denali area?

Previous studies have shown that providing visitor facilities and access opportunities to take advantage of outstanding recreational and mountain viewing opportunities in the South Denali area offer the best option to enhance visitor use and appreciation of the south Denali area for the widest variety of visitors. A south side destination also offers the best option in accommodating growth in year round visitor use by providing easy access to the remote areas on the south side of Denali National Park and the western area of Denali State Park.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough wishes to promote south side related tourism and economic development. The National Park Service has been considering a new south side destination

over the past several years to provide for additional visitor opportunities. The State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation supports the development of improved access to state lands on the south side of Denali National Park and Preserve, and a visitor destination facility in the western portion of Denali State Park. The State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities supports improvements to the Petersville Road, which would make transportation safer, more convenient, and more attractive to residents and visitors who access the area year round for a variety of activities.



View from the South Side of Denali. NPS Photo

## What other studies and plans have been done?

Interest in the development of the south side of Denali for public recreation and private pursuits has a history that extends back 30 years. Within the past ten years, the South Side Denali Development Concept Plan was finalized by a Record of Decision in 1997. This regional cooperative plan was prepared by the National Park Service, State of Alaska, Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Denali Borough, Ahtna, Inc., and Cook Inlet Region, Inc.

In 1997 the Governor of Alaska chartered the South Denali

Citizens Consultation Committee, which included representatives from south side communities and interested user groups to further explore options related to the south side plan.

In 1999, the Committee's final report recommended modifying the development concepts in the South Side Denali Development Concept Plan while remaining consistent with its goals and objectives: to provide resident and visitor facilities throughout the south side of the Alaska Range to meet a wide range of needs and interests of the

region's diverse user groups.

The 1997 Record of Decision for the *South Side Denali Development Concept Plan*, and the 1999 final report from the South Side Citizens Consultation Committee, provide the initial framework for discussions during the scoping process.

These two documents are available online at <http://www.southdenaliplanning.com>.

## What will the South Denali Implementation Plan do?

The South Denali Implementation Plan will present options; if it is a decision to build facilities, this plan would be the last step before design and construction. As the planning process moves forward, several alternatives will be presented. Some options being considered as alternatives include:

- **No new construction**
- **Construct facilities in the Peters Hills at the south-**

**ern boundary of Denali State Park.**

- **Construct facilities at Tokositna.** The 1997 South Side Denali Development Concept Plan identified this site overlooking the Tokositna River for facility development.
- **Construct facilities within the study area based on the public comments**

**received during this scoping process.**

The interagency planning team will continue scoping until April 15, 2004. We plan to release a Draft South Denali Implementation Plan in December 2004. After a 60-day public comment period, we will revise the Draft plan and publish a Final plan. We expect a Record of Decision by fall 2005.



Visitors enjoy the view of the South Side of Denali. NPS Photo.

## Your comments are important to us

Visitor facilities and access to recreational lands are the focus of this planning process.

Please let us know what you think about...

- What, if any, enhancements would you like to see on Petersville Road? Why? Enhancements include things like trash receptacles, pullouts, signs, and turning lanes. What, if any, visitor facilities should be provided? Why? Visitor facilities include things like restroom facilities, trailheads, trails, wayside exhibits, and campgrounds.
- Within the defined study area, what specific locations, if any, should be explored for a nature

center in South Denali? Why?

- If a nature center is constructed, what type of access should be provided from Petersville Road to the nature center? Suggestions we've heard so far include a public road, shuttle bus with restricted vehicular access, and tram. Where would a road alignment or tram begin and end?
- Should trails be constructed? Where? Where should they begin? What should their destinations be? What views or experiences should they provide? What types of trails would you like to see (length, width, surface, types of uses)?

## For more information

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The most current information is available electronically at [www.southdenaliplanning.com](http://www.southdenaliplanning.com). Printed information is available at the Anchorage, Wasilla, Talkeetna, Trapper Creek, and Fairbanks public libraries.

To continue to receive mailings or to receive updates via email, please contact Miriam Valentine (see contact information above).

## How to submit comments

Thank you for submitting your comments on the South Denali Implementation Plan by April 15, 2004.

- Denali National Park and Preserve  
South Denali Planning  
PO Box 588  
Talkeetna, AK 99676
- To enter comments directly into our database go to: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>
- Email: [dena\\_south\\_denali\\_public\\_comments@nps.gov](mailto:dena_south_denali_public_comments@nps.gov)

## Schedule for Public Open Houses

Please stop by anytime between 4:30-8:30 pm to learn more about the project and to share your thoughts with members of the interagency planning team. At 7:00 pm there will be a brief slide show followed by a question and answer session and time for formal comments.

*February 17, 2004: Anchorage*  
Spenard Recreation

Center, 2020 West 48<sup>th</sup> Ave.

*February 19, 2004: Talkeetna/*  
Trapper Creek/Y Area

Upper Susitna Senior Center, Mile 98 Parks Highway

*February 23, 2004 Wasilla*

Central Mat Su Public Safety Building, 101 West Swanson Ave.

*February 24, 2004: Healy to*  
Cantwell

McKinley Village Community Center

*February 25, 2004: Fairbanks*

Noel Wein Public Library, Auditorium,  
1215 Cowles Street

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South Denali Implementation Plan  
South Denali Agency Partnership  
350 East Dahlia Ave.  
Palmer, AK 99645

**Map Showing the South Denali Planning Area**

