

STATE OF ALASKA

ANILCA IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

SARAH PALIN, Governor

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February 15, 2007

Marcia Blaszak
Regional Director
National Park Service
240 West 5th Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Ms. Blaszak:

The State of Alaska reviewed the draft 2007 Superintendent's Proposed Compendiums for all park units in Alaska, as posted on the National Park Service web site. This letter represents the consolidated views of the State's resource agencies.

Once again we appreciate the Service's continued commitment to annual public review of park compendiums and the opportunities for dialogue throughout the year as issues develop. We understand that nationally, such compendium review and outreach happens rarely, if ever. The continued evolution and fine-tuning of these Alaska compendiums over the last few years illustrates the value of such outreach. We also greatly appreciate the summaries at the beginning of each Compendium that describe the changes since the previous year. These sections go a long way toward simplifying review of these complex documents.

This letter begins by addressing new issues or new information, followed by a review of several longstanding issues upon which we would like to remain on record.

DENALI

1.5 Closures and public use limits (a)(1) McKinley Park and Kantishna Airstrips:

The State appreciates the Park's need to address pedestrian safety on the McKinley Park and Kantishna Airstrips. Signage is key for enforcing state regulations. If the Service is interested in using sign content similar to state signs, state signage requirements are addressed in our general operating regulations (Article 1 of 17 AAC 45).

For clarification purposes, we recommend inserting "pedestrian" before "use of aircraft" in the first sentence of the rationale.

GLACIER BAY

13.1152(a) Private vessel permits and conditions:

We appreciate the Service's efforts to work with the local community to ensure the viability of this new private vessel permit system. We also appreciate the practicality associated with

including these operational details in the compendium, which provides flexibility to address unanticipated situations should they arise during the field season.

We also suggest the numbered section reference to 13.1152-13.1154 (located below the bullets on page 11) include the title, "Private Vessel Permits" to clarify the cross reference's purpose.

13.40(c) Restrictions on activities related to commercial fishing rights:

We look forward to working with the Park to fine-tune appropriate use of off-road vehicles in the Dry Bay area and on subsequent implementation of permanent regulations that balance the needs of local users with necessary requirements for resource protection.

KATMAI

13.25(a) Temporary closures and restrictions to camping:

We note this "temporary" camping closure at Hallo Bay Meadows has been in place since 2004, stretching beyond the limits of the temporary intent of this regulation. We also continue to object to the large area affected, and we have corresponding concerns about the potential impacts to uses of and access to adjacent areas. (See State's 2006 Compendium comments). On the other hand, we do recognize the bear/human management challenges facing the Service in this area and we are not categorically opposed to a camping closure. We strongly urge that appropriate staff from ADF&G and the Service get together in the near future and jointly reevaluate this closure for the 2007 season. If necessary, we could support a reconfigured closure that addresses our concerns. Such a revised closure could be carried as a new temporary closure for 2007 to see how it works. If experience and professional judgment show a need for a permanent camping closure in this area, then a permanent regulation should be proposed.

KENAI FJORDS

2.60(a)(3) Designated areas for grazing (Executive Summary only):

The correct location for the nearest Soil and Water Conservation District office is Homer. The local phone number for reference is 907-235-8177.

2.15(a)(1)(i) Areas designated as closed to pets:

We note that draft regulations for Alaska park units currently out for public review would, among other things, replace this compendium entry with the following proposed regulation:

13.1310 Pets

(a) Pets are prohibited--

(1) In the Exit Glacier Developed Area except in the parking lot, on the Exit Glacier road, or other areas designated by the superintendent;

Once this regulation is final, we request the superintendent designate a dog walking area adjacent to the Exit Glacier parking lot, and provide a disposal receptacle for waste. This will assist public compliance with the Park's intent to limit the impact of dogs in the Exit Glacier area.

WRANGELL-ST. ELIAS

13.45(b)(1)-(6) Exceptions to unattended or abandoned property:

It is not clear why the Service intends to limit this exception to federally qualified subsistence users when non-federally eligible trappers also legally trap in the Preserve and would likewise

benefit from this allowance. Also, recall that under state and federal policies, trapping is not categorized as a subsistence activity. We request the Service revise this compendium entry to:

(b)(1) Trappers are authorized to leave property associated with lawful trapping activities unattended in the park and preserve for a period up to 12 months.

“OLD BUSINESS”

The State maintains several long-standing concerns about several specific Compendium sections. As articulated in previous correspondence (e.g., State of Alaska comments on the 2006 Compendiums, dated February 15, 2006) we remain on record on the following concerns:

2.10(d) – Food storage – designated areas and methods: While some park food storage requirements are reasonably justified, others are too broadly applied or more restrictive than necessary, especially in light of state law at 5 AAC 92.230 that prohibits feeding of wildlife.

2.15(a)(1) Pets: Some of the backcountry pet prohibitions, especially those for Denali, Kenai Fjords, and Glacier Bay, are unnecessarily restrictive, especially in light of national regulations that require pets in national parks to be restrained on leashes.

13.160 [formerly 13.17(e)(4)(i)] Designated existing cabins, shelters or temporary facilities that may be shared for subsistence uses without a permit

We continue to recommend that more parks designate cabins that are routinely used for subsistence purposes. Such designations, which may be limited to specified periods of time, would alleviate the burden of requiring subsistence users to apply for a cabin use permit for predictable subsistence activities, consistent with Congressional intent to minimize permit requirements for such activities. The Denali and Western Arctic Compendiums offer two different approaches that address this concern.

43 CFR 36.11(g)(1) ORVs on established trails:

We continue to request the Service research (in cooperation with the State), recognize, and designate, where appropriate, pre-ANILCA trails, routes, or areas used by ORVs for subsistence activities, and develop accompanying regulations or use other management tools to prevent, minimize or mitigate resource damage.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. If you have any questions, please contact me at 907-269-7477.

Sincerely,



Sally Gibert
ANILCA Program Coordinator