

# STATE OF ALASKA

## **ANILCA IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM Office of Project Management and Permitting**

**SARAH PALIN, Governor**

550 W. 7<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE, SUITE 1430  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501  
PH: (907) 269-7529 / FAX: (907) 334-2509  
[susan.magee@alaska.gov](mailto:susan.magee@alaska.gov)

October 13, 2008

Paul Anderson, Superintendent  
Denali National Park and Preserve  
P.O. Box 9  
Denali Park, AK 99755

Dear Mr. Anderson:

The State of Alaska reviewed the Denali Park Road Vehicle Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Scoping Newsletter. The following comments represent the consolidated views of the State's resource agencies.

The State appreciates the National Park Service (Service) will utilize a multidisciplinary road study as a baseline for assessing impacts of traffic patterns and volume on the physical, biological, and social environment of the park. We also appreciate the Service's public outreach efforts focused on gaining a better understanding of the needs and desires of visitors (from both in-state and out-of-state), with the intent to reflect visitor experience in the evaluation of the road's carrying-capacity. In this way, final management decisions will not be based solely on vehicle numbers.

We are encouraged the Service is looking at creative approaches to accommodate and improve visitor experiences along the park road. To that end, we recommend the EIS identify ways to make the Park easier to visit and improve available information about bus system options, which we understand can be confusing to some visitors, especially independent travelers. For example, we are aware that some visitors do not understand the difference between park shuttle buses and commercial tour buses, nor realize they have a choice. Bus access options could also be expanded to better accommodate specific visitor needs, such as families with young children, those with special interests, or those primarily interested in access to hiking or wildlife viewing. In addition, those that depart a park shuttle bus often find it difficult to re-board another bus to either continue on or return to their point of origin. Dedicating more buses or allocating more space to that type of use may help alleviate the problem. We also recommend exploring new ways to better accommodate those that wish to travel all or portions of the road by bicycle. While a few buses may already include bike carriers, providing more carriers, as well as bike racks at campgrounds and other facilities, may benefit those that wish to combine bike access with hiking or camping; thereby allowing for use that does not necessarily rely on the bus system.

We also encourage the Service to utilize a tour bus reservation system that relies on local employees to provide better customer service. Working with out-of-state contract employees on the details of trip planning can be very unsatisfying since they have little, if any, local knowledge. In addition, the EIS could evaluate the availability and quality of historical and interpretive information provided on park shuttle buses. We applaud the many dedicated shuttle bus drivers who have taken time to learn about the natural history of the park and who enjoy the informal opportunity to voluntarily educate their passengers. Unfortunately, not all of the information conveyed is vetted by the Park's interpretive staff, and sometimes is inaccurate. Furthermore, the amount of information voluntarily offered by the drivers varies considerably. It would be helpful to improve the quality and consistency of the basic information without intruding on the personal styles and enthusiasm of the individual bus drivers.

Lastly, we recognize the park road is used by certain individuals and businesses for access to inholdings at Kantishna, pursuant to Section 1110(b) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. We expect the EIS will address such inholder access consistent with the recent regional direction provided in *"An Inholder's Guide to Accessing Inholdings to National Park System Units in Alaska."*

We hope these suggestions are helpful and appreciate the opportunity to comment. Please contact me at (907) 269-7529 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Magee", written in a cursive style.

Susan E. Magee  
ANILCA Project Coordinator

cc: Sally Gibert, ANILCA Program Coordinator