

STATE OF ALASKA

ANILCA IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM Office of Project Management and Permitting

SEAN PARNELL, Governor

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December 29, 2010

Meg Jensen, Superintendent
Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve
P.O. Box 439
Copper Center, AK 99573

Dear Ms. Jensen:

The State of Alaska reviewed the McCarthy Communication Sites Environmental Assessment, which evaluates a proposal by Copper Valley Wireless to construct two new communications facilities and improve one existing communications facility on public lands within Wrangell-St. Elias National Preserve. The following comments represent the consolidated views of the State's resource agencies.

The State supports improving cellular phone service in the Chitina Valley; thereby providing local residents, businesses, and visitors access to broadband and telecommunication services, as well as the associated health and safety benefits for those traveling the McCarthy Road, where emergency response could be hampered by the existing limited service.

We appreciate the objective nature of the Wilderness Eligibility Revision (Appendix C) and the recognition of changes that have affected the area's use since the original review was conducted in 1986, including the acquisition of the Kennecott Mines National Historic Landmark. We support revising the Gilahina site as ineligible and retaining the ineligible status for the Lakina site.

To mitigate potential resource impacts, we request the right-of-way permits include stipulations that recommend helicopter flights maintain a minimum altitude of 1,000 feet above ground level whenever feasible and safe, and avoid Dall sheep lambing areas on the south facing aspects in the general vicinity of the Crystalline Hills between April 15 and May 15. This recommendation also extends to the south side of the unnamed peaks between the Chokosna River and Gilahina River, and Fireweed Mountain. For additional information, please contact Becky Schwanke, with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation, at (907) 822-3461.

Thank you for this 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". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of the last name being a large, stylized 'M'.

Susan E. Magee
ANILCA Project Coordinator

cc: Sally Gibert, ANILCA Program Coordinator
Geoffrey Bleakley, NPS Environmental Protection Specialist