



**National Park Service**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**

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## National Park Service News Release

**Release:** June 8, 2011

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### Lake Clark NP to Honor Victims of Plane Crash

The National Park Service on Saturday will honor seven employees and a charter pilot who lost their lives in a plane crash nearly 36 years ago during a flight over land that would become part of Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.

The seven employees, along with their Ketchum Air Service pilot, were on an orientation flight from Anchorage when the plane crashed into a mountainside near the Kijik River about near Lake Clark. All eight people on board were killed.

Most on board were office workers with the Alaska Task Force, a small group of federal employees working on plans that would result in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 and the designation of millions of acres of new national parkland, including Lake Clark. They had spent the summer typing field notes and were on their way to meet Richard Proenneke at his Twin Lakes cabin 40 miles north of Port Alsworth.

Staff at Lake Clark NP will host a community program on Saturday morning in Port Alsworth honoring those who were lost. On Sunday morning, the park and family members will go across Lake Clark to the Priest Rock cabin, located near the crash site, and place a memorial plaque on the historic building.

The victims were:

- Keith Trexler, 43, key planner for the Lake Clark proposal, Anchorage.
- Mrs. Dawn H. Finney, 22, clerk-typist for the Alaska Task Force, Anchorage.
- Mrs. Rhonda Barber, 20, worked on EIS for the Alaska Task Force, Anchorage.
- Mrs. Jane Matlock, 33, of the U.S Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, Anchorage.
- Miss Carol Sue Byler, 21, office worker for the Alaska Task Force, Anchorage.
- Mrs. Janice Cooper, 24, office worker for the Alaska Task Force, Anchorage.
- Mrs. Mickett "Clara" Veara, 45, Alaska Task Force drafting trainee, Anchorage.
- James I. Smelcer, 27, pilot, Anchorage.

"The Alaska Task Force workers were critical to the establishment of the park, but their effort and tragic loss have never been publicly recognized by the NPS or by the park," said Lake Clark NP Superintendent Joel Hard. "It is time to tell this story, recognize the families involved and remind people that preserving public lands is a privilege but one with considerable costs we cannot forget."

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