

Chapter Nine: Managing the Newly-Expanded Park and Preserve, 1981-1994

Getting Started

As noted in Chapter 8, President Jimmy Carter signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act on December 2, 1980, culminating a long, sometimes bitter struggle over the fate of more than one hundred million acres of previously-undesignated federal land in Alaska. One element in that bill—Section 202(3)(a)—added more than 2.5 million acres of national park to Mount McKinley National Park and added another 1.3 million acres of national preserve; as a result, the newly-renamed Denali National Park and Preserve spread out over almost 6.1 million acres of land on both the north and south sides of the Alaska Range. On its surface, Carter’s signing of the bill meant that the new park and preserve was actually somewhat smaller than the previous parkland (composed of Mount McKinley National Park and Denali National Monument) had been. But because Carter’s monument proclamations had been temporary measures intended to provide interim protection until Congress completed its work, the National Park Service and Congress had provided minimal funding during the previous two years for managing the national monuments. With the lands bill passed, the NPS was finally able to contemplate long-term management of an enlarged park unit.

Park Service officials recognized that, due to the enormous acreage that had just been added, the purpose of the new parkland was in some ways substantially different than before. The 1917 act that established Mount McKinley National Park cryptically stated that the park was “established as a game refuge” and that it also provided “for recreation purposes by the public and for the preservation of animals, birds, and fish and for the preservation of the natural curiosities and scenic beauty thereof.”¹ But when President Carter, in 1978, moved to establish Denali National Monument on lands north, west, and south of the existing park, he felt the need to produce an elaborate rationale to justify his action.² His proclamation therefore gave a detailed description of the need to protect 1) the entire mountain massif, 2) the various glaciers flowing southward from the Alaska Range, 3) the “geologically unique” Cathedral Spires area, 4) the habitat for the McKinley caribou herd, 5) the Toklat River’s Warm Springs area, and 6) “the unique subsistence culture of the local residents.”³ Language in the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), by contrast, did not demand the same degree of legal justification

for protecting the new acreage surrounding the existing park. The act therefore stated that

The park additions and preserve shall be managed for the following purposes, among others: To protect and interpret the entire mountain massif, and additional scenic mountain peaks and formations; and to protect habitat for, and populations of fish and wildlife including, but not limited to, brown/grizzly bears, moose, caribou, Dall sheep, wolves, swans and other waterfowl; and to provide continued opportunities, including reasonable access, for mountain climbing, mountaineering and other wilderness recreational activities.⁴

The purposes in the 1980 act differed from those in the 1978 proclamation in several ways. The 1980 act’s reference to the “entire mountain massif,” for example, effectively encompassed the first three purposes laid out in the 1978 proclamation. The 1980 act broadened the protection of a specific caribou herd to include a broad spectrum of fish and wildlife. However, it omitted any mention of the Toklat Warm Springs, because the 1980 boundaries did not include that area. And subsistence was provided for in the 1980 act, though it was no longer an express purpose for the enlarged parkland.

As noted in Chapter 8, it had become apparent by the late summer of 1980 that Congress would pass an Alaska lands bill. On that basis, Alaska Area Director John Cook⁵ set into motion a process that resulted in the preparation of vacancy announcements for superintendents and other staff in the various newly-established parklands. During that same period, the early retirement of Superintendent Frank Betts at Mount McKinley, in March 1980, meant that a replacement was needed there as well. NPS ranger Charles A. (Chuck) Budge—until then the ranger-in-charge at volatile Wrangell-St. Elias National Monument—ably served as the park’s acting superintendent for almost six months during the spring and summer of 1980. Budge, however, was in line to become Wrangell-St. Elias’s first superintendent once Congress completed its deliberations.⁶

As a result, Cook cast about for a new superintendent. After screening numerous applicants, he hired Robert C. “Clay” Cunningham, a biologist

The 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act added federal lands to Mt. McKinley National Park and renamed the enlarged area Denali National Park and Preserve. NPS file, Denali National Park and Preserve

Superintendent Robert “Clay” Cunningham is shown here with his secretary, Marsha Karle, in July, 1982. He was the first superintendent to administer the newly-enlarged and renamed Denali National Park and Preserve. DENA 9025, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



who at that time was the Operations and Maintenance Chief at Gateway National Recreation Area in New York and New Jersey. Cook hired Cunningham, in part, because of his ability to think and act independently; he also sought that same quality in the other superintendents he hired in the weeks and months after ANILCA was signed. Cunningham began his job on August 24, 1980, knowing full well that the management of more than 4,000,000 acres surrounding the existing park—which was then managed minimally, and primarily out of Anchorage—would soon be his responsibility.⁷

As Cunningham settled into his new position, he soon recognized that Congress apparently looked with favor upon Denali, with the result being that the park’s budget increased dramatically during the early 1980s. During the 1979 fiscal year, Mount McKinley’s budget had been \$1.6 million, but a year later it shot up more than a million dollars. In the wake of ANILCA, the budget increased by almost a half-million dollars, and during the two succeeding years it rose more than \$700,000 each year, the result being that in 1983, the park’s budget was a lofty \$4.6 million—almost three times what it had been in 1979.⁸ The increased budget, in turn, meant that additional funds were available for staff (both permanent and seasonal), equipment, and other necessary items.

An increased budget, however, did little to address the many concerns related to how the newly-expanded park and the newly-established

preserve should be managed. Park staff knew, in the wake of Carter’s 1978 proclamations, that the agency had cobbled together a set of management regulations that provided specific advice on how the newly-established Alaska national monuments would be managed. There was a general recognition that, in some ways, the new national monument lands could be managed similar to NPS units elsewhere. But in Alaska, long-established lifeways demanded that management policies reflect distinct approaches to subsistence, access, cabin occupancy, vehicle usage, and kindred matters. Interim regulations to address these matters had taken effect in late December 1978, and a proposed rule was issued in June 1979.⁹ These remained in effect until ANILCA’s passage. Soon afterward, however, an NPS team began work on establishing a new set of regulations; some of those (i.e., most of the sections pertaining to public use and recreation) would be applied to all of Alaska’s park areas, while others (specifically the sections related to subsistence) would apply only in those park areas designated for subsistence use. (At Denali, subsistence uses were sanctioned in Denali National Preserve and in the newly-expanded portion of Denali National Park; the “old park,” however, would remain off-limits to subsistence activity.)¹⁰ In order to ensure that the public would have regulations that reflected Congress’s intent (as stated in ANILCA), the NPS rushed out a proposed rule in January 1981. The agency then had a public comment period, which included a series of public meetings, prior to finalizing its regulations in June 1981.¹¹

Cunningham and most of the other personnel who supervised the newly-established parklands had experience that was limited to the “Lower 48” parks. As a result, many were unsure regarding the nuances of the new law and of the regulations that followed. Fortunately, however, Cunningham was able to enlist the considerable talents of Dr. Lois Dalle-Molle, wife of the park’s resource management specialist. Dr. Dalle-Molle, an accomplished researcher, compiled a three-ring binder of legislative and administrative materials pertaining to ANILCA and the subsequent regulations. That compilation was repeatedly used to answer questions related to the management of Denali’s newly-acquired parkland; in time, superintendents of many other Alaska parks and monuments also benefited from the materials that she had compiled.¹²

The 1981 Bus Accident and its Ramifications

As noted in Chapter 8, the 1970s witnessed a major upsurge in park visitation; between 1971 and 1980 the number of recreational visitors to Mount McKinley National Park rose from about 45,000 to more than 215,000, an almost fivefold increase in nine years. In 1971, prior to the opening of the Parks Highway,¹³ private automobiles comprised most of the traffic along the park road, but beginning the following year, park road traffic

shrank considerably and consisted primarily of either NPS-sponsored shuttle buses or concessioner-sponsored tour buses. Most of the bus drivers along the park road during the 1960s and 1970s compiled an enviable safety record, but several accidents had resulted in passenger injuries, and a 1974 accident resulted in an elderly visitor’s death.

In 1981, more park visitors than ever before came to Denali National Park. The flow of those visitors in and out of the park, however, was marred on June 15, when the park road witnessed its worst bus accident ever. That evening, just after 8 p.m., an eastbound tour bus operated by Outdoor World, Ltd. rolled off the road just west of Thorofare Pass, tipped over on its side, and rolled down the hillside. (The mishap took place at mile 64.5 on the park road, about two miles east of Eielson Visitor Center and within a few hundred yards of the 1974 bus accident site.) Two elderly women died at the scene and a third died at Fairbanks Memorial Hospital; another 28 were injured, three seriously.¹⁴ A National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigative team soon arrived at the site; the road’s overall safety, however, was not in question. Shuttle bus traffic continued to Eielson and beyond, as it had before. Tour buses, however, immediately stopped

On June 15, 1981, an eastbound tour bus rolled off the park road just east of Thorofare Pass, resulting in the death of three passengers. Brad Ebel Collection



Road surface dust, shown here on Teklanika Flats, was one of the park road problems documented by Federal Highway Administration studies. Federal Highway Administration, from "1984 Road Improvement Study"



serving points west of Stony Hill, a practice that continues to the present day.¹⁵ Recognizing that the NTSB report would take months to complete, and also in response to statements from those involved in the mishap, the park concessioner assumed all responsibility for the accident and settled the resulting claims.¹⁶ In 1983, however, the concessioner sued the federal government based on the idea that the NPS was negligent in the road's design, construction, and maintenance. That case dragged on for years, and the NPS ultimately assumed some financial responsibility.¹⁷

The NPS, during this period, was in the midst of reassessing the condition of the park road and evaluating ways to improve it. In early 1978, Congress became sufficiently concerned about the problem that it directed the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to complete an engineering reconnaissance study of the road. That study, completed later that year, gave the NPS five alternatives; they ranged from the minimally-intrusive application of a dust palliative to the construction of a 40-foot-wide paved road. Each of these alternatives were applied in one of two scenarios: if road gravel would be obtained within the park, and if external gravel sources (primarily from sites near Kantishna and Healy) were utilized. The FHWA recommended no specific alternative. NPS regional office personnel then wrote an addendum to the report in which they framed the FHWA within a broader context: "The most difficult aspect of managing the ... Park road is that the public disagrees as to what the road should be. Views are polarized; solutions for

even relatively simple problems on the road have become difficult because they are perceived as a prelude to more drastic or undesirable actions." The addendum then listed a litany of possible actions, along with the various stakeholders who supported or opposed each of them. The NPS, significantly, also failed to support any specific alternative. Perhaps because Congress was then in the midst of debating far larger Alaska actions—those which resulted in ANILCA—no near-term changes took place pertaining to the improvement or maintenance of the park road.¹⁸

Soon after the NPS released its February 1979 report, the agency launched a systemwide Road Inspection and Inventory Program (RIP), and in 1980 FHWA personnel completed a Road Inventory and Needs Study—much lengthier than its 1978 study—that numerically rated the sufficiency of structural, safety, and service characteristics along the park road. The study noted that the quality of the roadbed diminished steadily as the traveler headed west. A major cause of the road's poor condition, moreover, was the lack of gravel. Traffic-generated dust on the road east of the Teklanika River had removed almost all surface material, and the road from Teklanika to Wonder Lake had had no upgrading with additional surface material since the 1930s, making it "difficult through normal grading procedures to maintain a suitable riding surface." Blowing dust, moreover, continued to be a nagging problem.¹⁹

Agency personnel responded to the problem by recommending that the park commence a new road maintenance program that involved the

addition of new gravel; this solution allowed the park road to maintain its scenic, rustic character, but it did not involve additional widening or paving. That gravel, moreover, would be obtained within the park. The agency, therefore, sought additional funding for the purchase of rock crushing equipment. Congress, in response, included \$800,000 for that purpose in a supplemental appropriation bill that was signed into law on June 4, 1981.²⁰

By the time of the June 1981 bus accident, therefore, the agency was well aware that portions of the park road were in poor shape, and it had taken initial steps toward its improvement. It did not, however, feel that it was culpable for the bus rollover. Shortly after the accident, an NPS spokesperson (according to a news account) stated that the park road was “safe if driven at moderate speeds,” and more specifically that “the section of road where the tour bus overturned ... wasn’t seen as a trouble spot on the dirt and crushed-gravel road.”²¹ The accident, however, may have spurred the agency to speed up its road improvement plans. Later that year, personnel from the NPS’s Denver Service Center began work on an environmental assessment (EA) for the park’s road rehabilitation program; that document, which apparently reiterated FHWA recommendations that had been made prior to

the accident, was completed in February 1982. It stated that the park road, west of the Teklanika River, was “between 18 and 24 feet” wide, and recommended that “the established width of the road ... be retained [at] approximately 20 feet in width between the shoulders.” It further recommended that

The existing gravel surface would be rehabilitated through the placement of additional gravel fines, and coarse base and shoulder material in deteriorated sections. In general, the road would not be upgraded or widened beyond the previously established standard. Gravel material from in-park sources is available in adequate quality and quantity to produce an additional 4 to 6 inches of surface material for the 86.6-mile-long road. ... In some small sections the road would be raised by as much as 48 inches during rehabilitation efforts.²²

The EA’s preferred alternative also suggested potential gravel sources. It called “for the utilization of borrow material from existing gravel pits and streamside sources along the park road, as well as stockpiled material in the form of ‘river training’ or channeling structures herein referred to as

In 1982 a gravel crushing plant was set up on Stony Creek, where it operated from 1983 through 1985. Brad Ebel Collection



'berms.'" It noted that front-end loaders would feed "gravel material ... into a mobile rock-crushing/screening unit." The processed gravel would then be taken (if possible) directly to the road site; material not immediately used "would be stockpiled in previously disturbed pit and scrape sites unnoticeable to travelers along the road." The EA identified eight different potential borrow sites; they ranged from the Jenny Creek area (mile 10.2) west to Stony Creek Terrace (mile 59.8). Alternatives that recommended the use of gravel sources either outside of the park or in the Kantishna area were ruled out due to cost factors, and an alternative recommending that the road be paved was rejected for various environmental reasons.²³

Once the report was completed and approved, the park—thanks to support from Sen. Ted Stevens—received an additional \$500,000 congressional add-on to purchase the needed rock crusher. As a result, park maintenance crews bought a crusher from the U.S. Navy in late 1981 and set it up at Stony Creek Terrace during the summer of 1982.²⁴

NPS officials, who were unsure where gravel for the park road might be obtained, asked the FHWA in late 1981 to weigh in with a new study that would provide a "professional appraisal of rock sources along the park road." They also

asked for "professional assistance in survey, minor realignment, design of road profile and formulation of a construction plan."²⁵ That request resulted in a park road improvement study, which FHWA officials worked on during the 1982 field season. That same year, Congress passed the Surface Transportation Act of 1982,²⁶ and just a week before its passage, NPS officials decided to convene a Park Road Standards Task Force which, specifically, would review—on a national level—the agency park road standards that had first been formulated in 1968. The 1968 road standards report provided general guidance; it did not, however, mandate a specific width for any portion of Denali's park road.

In May 1983, in the midst of the task force's work, the FHWA completed its draft road improvement study for the Denali park road and asked NPS officials at the park, Alaska Regional Office, and Denver Service Center to review it.²⁷ The draft report recommended a minimum uniform 22-foot road width between Teklanika and Kantishna, which was two feet wider than DSC had recommended in its February 1982 EA. NPS officials were then asked to comment on the report, and Superintendent Cunningham on June 15 recommended to other NPS officials that about 29.9 miles of the 34.4 miles of park road between the Teklanika River and Eielson Visitor Center should have a "top width" of 24 feet.²⁸ (The park

The park road maintenance crew began widening Thorofare Pass in 1984. Brad Ebel Collection



In the summer of 1986 the rock crusher was moved from Stony Creek to the alluvial fan of a small creek near the Toklat Road Camp. NPS Roads Office Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve



superintendent may have suggested a wider road due to recommendations that the NPS task force was providing—which called for a 24-foot road for light-duty gravel roads with tour bus traffic²⁹—or he may have simply erred on the side of caution because the park, in the past ten years, had endured two catastrophic bus accidents on a narrow, winding portion of the park road.) Other NPS officials agreed with Cunningham’s assessment, and the final FHWA report, which was dated February 1984, called for a 24-foot roadbed (except in “rugged terrain” areas, where greater widths might be possible) for the 31-mile stretch of road between the Teklanika River and Thorofare Pass.³⁰

During the summer of 1983, gravel extraction operations began. (This was necessary to provide much-needed gravel for normal road maintenance, but also for additional materials should widening be necessary.) Wally Jones, a mechanic brought up from Gateway National Recreation Area, supervised the Stony Creek Terrace gravel crushing operations; these operations continued throughout the 1983 season and for the next two summers as well. Meanwhile, officials in the NPS’s regional office reviewed the park’s decision regarding road widths. Perhaps in search of a middle ground, they asked the FHWA for “further study” in 1984 of “steep and unstable areas at Eielson Bluffs, Polychrome Pass and Sable Pass,” all of which had been proposed for widening.³¹ The agency, as requested, provided the NPS the preliminary draft of a feasibility study for upgrading the park road at these sites. This study was quietly shelved.³²

The FHWA Road Improvement Study—both in its draft and final forms—had recommended four

priorities for widening and otherwise improving the 31 miles of road between Teklanika and Thorofare Pass, and based on those priorities, Cunningham asked his road crews to begin widening, in the summer of 1983, the 5.2-mile segment between Stony Hill and Eielson. (This was the section of road where both the 1974 and 1981 bus accidents had taken place.) During the following two summers, crews continued their work on that segment. In 1985, after the segment was completed, road crews were dispatched to next-highest priority area, the eight-mile stretch of road between the Teklanika River and Sable Pass (which included Igloo Canyon, where overflow ice problems had long bedeviled spring road-opening crews). But in mid-August 1985, Cunningham halted work on the second project because the approved improvement program in Igloo Canyon called for up to 48 inches of new material, and he was chagrined to see that such a deep fill was creating an unacceptably wide road corridor.³³ Given that change of heart, the remainder of FHWA’s park road improvement program was abandoned.

In 1986, the rock crusher was moved east to the alluvial fan adjacent to the western Toklat River bridge—another of the approved 1982 extraction sites—and a small amount of material was processed there, to be used in normal road maintenance work. In addition, the gravel screening plant was moved to the long-established Teklanika pit (mile 28.0); because of the excellent material available there, “only minimal crushing and screening” was needed. In later years, park maintenance crews continued to use the Teklanika pit. But because of provisions in the 1982 road improvement plan, Teklanika’s gravel was used only for annual maintenance work.³⁴



A park road maintenance crew replaced the wooden bridge at Hogan Creek with two large culverts in 1983. NPS Roads Office Collection, Denali National Park and Preserve



It is also important to note that the same planning effort that identified the poor condition of the park road also pointed out the dismal condition of many of the bridges in the road corridor. At the time of ANILCA's passage only one bridge along that route—the Igloo Creek Bridge, 34 miles west of the Parks Highway—was less than 20 years old, and many of the remaining bridges were treated timber bridges that were at or beyond their replacement age. A broad cross-section of interests—Kantishna miners, park staff, the general public, bus drivers, and FHWA staff—agreed that several of these bridges needed to be either replaced or repaired. A team of FHWA engineers who inspected the park's various bridges in 1980 concurred with that assessment.³⁵ As early as 1970, FHWA personnel had become concerned about the structural stability of the Savage River Bridge, a wooden trestle that dated from 1951. That agency had repaired the 284-foot-long bridge in 1975, but by 1980 officials recognized that the bridge needed to be replaced.³⁶

Goaded by a gravely-worded FHWA bridge-inspection report, concern turned into action in June of 1981, when Congress passed a supplemental funding bill that provided \$576,000 to replace the Savage River bridge.³⁷ Work on the bridge was completed in 1983. By this time, additional funds were being provided to replace other bridges. Between 1982 and 1985, at least nine small bridges were torn out and replaced with large culverts.³⁸ Then, during the summers of 1986 and 1987, contractors working for the FHWA replaced the two massive Toklat River bridges—each some 430 feet long—as well as the Moose Creek bridge near Wonder Lake.³⁹ As a result of that massive series of projects, the park road—by the end of 1987—sporting steel or reinforced-concrete bridges that were fully in conformance with federal guidelines. During the twenty years that have elapsed since that time, none of these bridges has been replaced, and they have remained sufficiently strong that the most recent (2007) inspection reports have noted all of the park bridges have an estimated remaining life of 20 years or more.⁴⁰

Renewing the Park Concessions Contract

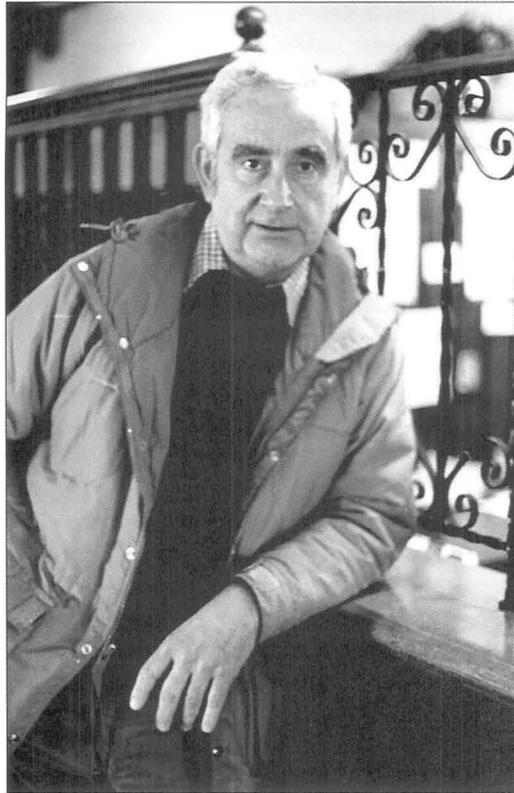
Throughout the 1980s and on into the 1990s, perhaps the biggest challenge at the park—and certainly the issue with the highest public visibility—was how to protect the park's values in the face of increasing visitation. As noted in Chapter 8, recreational visitation to the park had zoomed up from 88,000 in 1972 (the first summer after the Parks Highway had opened, and the first year in which the park road was closed to most private vehicles) up to 216,000 in 1980.

The 1980s brought on even higher visitation (see Appendix A); in 1984 more than 395,000 people visited Denali National Park and Preserve, and in 1988 that number exceeded 592,000. Park staff were well aware that these visitors, despite their high volume, had come to Denali to seek what, to many of them, was a wilderness setting: scenic vistas, wildlife, an uncluttered landscape, and other values that were central to the goals set forth in the park legislation. Recognizing that the agency needed to provide visitors with a quality park experience, NPS staff did their best during this period to provide that experience while protecting the park's natural values.

When Congress was deliberating the Alaska lands act during the late 1970s, it was well aware that planning for the new parks (or for the expanded areas of existing parks) was a key aspect of the parks' success. As a result, Section 1301 of the bill that President Carter signed in December 1980 stated that the agency needed to “develop and transmit to the appropriate Committees of the Congress a conservation and management plan” for each new or expanded unit and have it completed within a five-year time frame.⁴¹

But because of the park's dramatically increasing visitation during this period, the agency did not need a congressional nudge to begin a planning process. In March 1980, planners from the Denver Service Center began the general management planning process for the park, and a task directive for the project was signed on May 30.⁴² DSC personnel recognized that the preparation of a GMP would require a multi-year effort, but because of the park's exploding visitation, a more immediate planning process was needed to address development-related problems. Agency planners, therefore, decided that the best near-term action was the preparation of a supplement to the park's interim development concept plan. (Agency officials had approved that plan in March 1976, but few of its recommendations had been acted upon.)⁴³

The primary impetus for the supplement to the interim DCP was the pressing need to issue a new park concessions contract. As noted in earlier chapters, Mt. McKinley National Park Company had signed a twenty-year concessions contract with the NPS in September 1967, and since that time the contract had changed hands to U.S. Natural Resources (1970), Outdoor World (1972), and ARA Services, Inc. (1978). The turnover in companies meant that the park concession grew from a fairly modestly-capitalized operation to one in which it became an increasingly small part of a large-scale services provider. This trend was indicative of what was taking place at NPS



George Fleharty had a long tenure as concessions representative, from the late 1960s to his retirement in 1989. Butterfield Photo, DENA 9021, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

concessions operations throughout the country. What made the situation distinct at Denali, however, was that the on-site concessions representative ever since the late 1960s had been the same individual: George Fleharty. Fleharty combined his business expertise with an obvious love for the park, and because he was effective as both a company representative and in his dealings with NPS personnel, he was a welcome, long-term presence at the park throughout this period. He would remain at the park, in fact, until his retirement in 1989.⁴⁴

Although ARA Services, in 1980, still had seven years to go on its concessions contract, the NPS moved to establish a new contract for two reasons. First, ARA had unsuccessfully attempted to establish a new twenty-year contract back in 1978, when the company was in the process of purchasing Outdoor World. In addition, NPS officials belatedly recognized that the “temporary” hotel that had been hastily constructed during the winter of 1972–73—in the wake of the September 1972 fire—had attained a measure of permanence and that the agency had no plans to replace it anytime soon. Agency officials further recognized that they wanted to effect some improvements to the hotel area, many of which they hoped would be paid for by the concessioner, and that the concessioner was seeking a long-term contract in order to justify any major new investments.⁴⁵ Inasmuch as the concessioner had already constructed a new hotel just outside the park (the McKinley Chalets, which had opened

in 1978 and had expanded in succeeding years), the concessioner did not attempt to pressure the NPS into replacing the McKinley Park Hotel with a more modern, sophisticated facility.⁴⁶

Given that scenario, NPS officials from Denver arrived at the park in 1980 to work on the supplement to the interim DCP, which was published in February 1981. The document listed a series of problems in the hotel/depot area; these problems were familiar to most park visitors and had been discussed among park officials since 1978 if not before. They included 1) replacing the concessioner’s dirt-floor bus shelter with a new, larger bus maintenance facility, 2) replacing the concessioner’s housing complex (in “the meadows” area) with a larger complex that is structurally sound and meets all health and safety codes, 3) expanding the hotel coffee shop and replacing the inadequate, year-old 40’ x 60’ “circus tent” with a proper site for NPS interpretive programs, 4) improving facilities for backpackers, both at the hostel and the Morino walk-in campground, and 5) reassessing the appearance and functions of both the filling station/general store and the hotel’s loading zone area. The agency laid out a suggested “long range development concept” with a series of intended outcomes, but the document made no specific recommendations on how, or by whom, these improvements should be underwritten. There was an implicit recognition, however, that the park concessioner would need to absorb many of these costs as part of any new concessions contract.⁴⁷

On February 20, shortly after officials had issued the *Supplement to the Interim Development Concept Plan*, the agency announced via the *Federal Register* that it proposed “to negotiate a concession contract with ARA Services dba Outdoor World Ltd.” at Denali for a 20-year period. Less than a month later, Interior Department officials “found it necessary to revise certain requirements of the proposed contract.” It invited any outside interests to submit new bids, but cautioned that the concessioner, due to provisions in the 1965 Concessions Policy Act, was “entitled to be given preference in the renewal of the contract and in the negotiation of a new contract.” Interested parties were given until May 1, 1981 to submit proposals to the NPS.⁴⁸

Several months later, NPS and ARA officials met to hammer out a new contract. Superintendent Cunningham, in a recent interview, recalled that he and a concessions specialist from the regional office met in Anchorage for a week-long meeting with Fleharty and five Philadelphia-based ARA attorneys. He noted that “it was David and Goliath. And I sat at the table, and I was determined

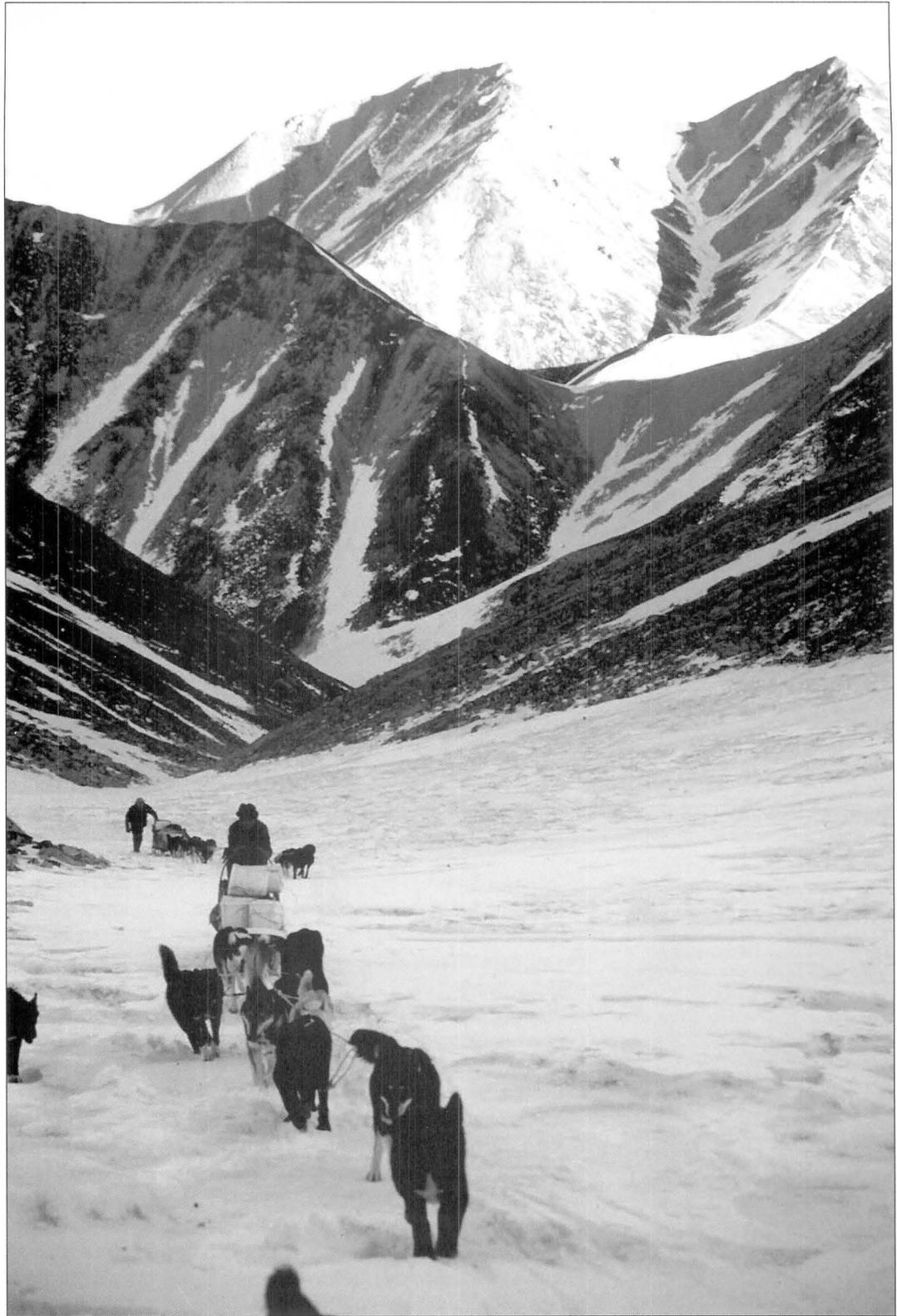


The original park entrance road passed the concession-run gas station and mercantile, on the right, and the Alaska Railroad depot, in the center. Federal Highway Administration, from "1984 Road Improvement Study"

to listen for four days before I uttered a word." What came out of that meeting was a 20-year concessions contract that was signed on September 26, 1981. As part of the pact, ARA agreed to underwrite a \$2.1 million building and improvement program. It also rewrote the relationship between the concessioner and the shuttle bus system; whereas the concessioner previously had an exclusive right to operate the shuttle bus system and was guaranteed a 10 per cent profit margin, the new contract removed the exclusive-rights clause. In return, however, the franchise fee rate dropped in half (from 1.5% to 0.75% of the concessioner's gross receipts) along with other favorable considerations.⁴⁹ Indeed, shuttle bus operations soon became independent of the concessioner, and beginning in 1982 the NPS solicited annual shuttle bus operations contracts. Those who were awarded the contracts supplied both the buses and the drivers; some of the drivers were veterans who had served shuttle-bus passengers for many years, while the experience of others had been limited to driving primary and secondary students to and from school.⁵⁰

While ARA was certainly the most visible company to most park visitors during this period,

the passage of ANILCA set into motion an entirely new class of tourism operators: that is, companies that operated under commercial use licenses, or CULs. For most of the previous sixty years, the vast majority of tourists had seen the park's scenic wonders and remarkable wildlife from the seat of a tour bus or shuttle bus, while a significant minority of other visitors (particularly beginning in the 1960s) had hoisted packs on their backs and taken self-guided trips into the park's backcountry. But beginning in the 1970s, an increasing number of visitors clamored for guided trips into the park's backcountry. Prior to President Carter's December 1978 proclamations, language in the park's concessions contract had effectively prevented most other for-profit businesses from conducting tours in the park.⁵¹ But on the margins of the "old park," and in the millions of acres of newly-established national monuments, there were a growing number of companies that provided flightseeing tours, backpacking guide services, river float trip services, photography and hunting guide services, and similar backcountry adventure opportunities. NPS officials recognized that these operators had a legitimate right to use the land as they had before, and language in ANILCA, passed two



Denali Dog Tours & Wilderness Freighters operated with a commercial use license in Denali National Park and Preserve, providing sled dog trips for park visitors and commercial gear hauling services for mountain climbers on the north side of Mt. McKinley. Will and Linda Forsberg are shown here hauling climbers' supplies to McGonagall Pass. Jon Nierenberg Collection

years later, similarly guaranteed that the operators that had historically provided commercial services within the new parklands would be able to continue providing those services.⁵²

Given that legal sanction, many companies began operating in the park with CULs. These licenses, which were inexpensive to obtain and easy to renew, allowed outside companies to

carry on a wide range of outdoor activities in the newly-established parklands, including both Denali's "new park" and the preserve. All that was needed was evidence of adequate insurance and an Alaska business license. The only real drawback to these licenses, from the operator's point of view, was that they could not erect any buildings or other permanent structures within a park unit. In addition, the fact that they were



By 1982, the Riley Creek Information Center had become an inadequate facility. DENA 11471, Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection

freely available to all qualified applicants prevented anyone from limiting competition. Given steadily rising visitor volumes, tourism operators readily agreed to obtain CULs in order to bring more visitors into the park. By 1983, almost 40 different operators were providing one or more services to Denali visitors under a commercial use license. The number of those operators remained fairly stable (between 35 and 50) for more than a decade.⁵³ (See Figure 1.)

Parkwide Management Plans, 1981-1986

Once the concession contract had been signed, NPS staff was now free to tackle a broader range of general park issues and resume work on the park's general management plan (GMP). But Denver Service Center planners, in an apparent about-face, decided instead to concentrate on a Development Concept Plan (DCP) for the park road corridor. After noting that DCPs are "action plans that lead to the implementation of proposals contained in the parkwide GMP" (and thus follow the GMP's publication), they then noted that the road-corridor DCP at Denali was "being accomplished in conjunction with the general planning effort and will become an integral part of the GMP." They justified this approach based on 1) the deterioration of visitor and management facilities and the lack of a comprehensive plan to guide future improvement, 2) the recent passage of ANILCA suggested

that "there is reason to anticipate funding for a number of improvement projects within the park," and 3) the recently-completed concessions contract demanded major improvements in the hotel area. Planners may not have known it at the time, but the completion of the DCP—which purportedly was being done "in conjunction with the general planning effort"—would predate the GMP's completion by almost four years.⁵⁴

Planners worked on the road-corridor DCP during the winter of 1981-82, and in March 1982 they issued an environmental assessment that laid out the agency's options and suggested plans. The agency issued a flurry of recommendations, the most prominent of which included:

- a new interpretive/transportation center to replace the Riley Creek information center
- a major addition to Riley Creek campground
- a new camper services building adjacent to the campground
- a new audio-visual building adjacent to the hotel
- a new hotel coffee shop to replace the existing railcar facility
- a new dining room and housing for concessions employees
- a new bus maintenance shop

Figure 1. Denali Commercial Visitor Service Providers, 1982 to Present

	1982	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006
Air Taxi/Air Tours*	<i>3/1</i>	10	12	16	17	10	20	26	<i>13/9</i>	<i>13/9</i>	<i>10/7</i>	<i>12/7</i>	<i>11/5</i>
Backpacking Guide Service	7	11	12	15	6	3	5	10	9	5	5	3	2
Big Game Transporters	0	1	1	0	0	1	4	3	0	0	1	2	2
Dog Sled Services (various)	<i>0/1</i>	3	3	4	2	0	0	<i>1/1</i>	1	4	3	3	3
Flightseeing	*	*	*	*	7	4	9	<i>14/1</i>	<i>8/2</i>	<i>7/2</i>	<i>1/2</i>	*	*
Group Camping	0	0	0	5	6	1	9	10	12	13	14	9	13
Hiking	0	0	0	0	10	4	7	<i>9/2</i>	<i>10/3</i>	<i>5/3</i>	<i>8/3</i>	<i>3/3</i>	<i>2/2</i>
Horse Packing and Wagon Rides	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Hunting Guide Service	3	3	3	4	3	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Mountaineering (Old Park)	7	6	7	7	7	6	7	6	6	6	6	6	6
Mountaineering (New Park)	4	8	9	14	6	4	3	8	10	14	11	8	12
Photography Guide Service	4	0	0	6	2	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
River Trip Guide Service	9	6	10	8	8	3	5	<i>5/1</i>	<i>3/1</i>	1	1	1	1
Sport Fishing Guide Service	1	4	5	3	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Winter Backcountry Guides	4	8	7	6	9	3	7	6	2	2	3	1	2
TOTAL	26	40	45	48	49	24	47	64	61	65	56	47	53

Notes:

This chart is based on licenses granted, not on actual activities; thus the number of firms conducting the above activities may be much less than the figures noted above.

The businesses summarized above, in most cases, obtained Commercial Use Licenses to operated in the park. (Beginning in 1996, these licenses were called Incidental Business Permits, and in 2006 these were known as Concession Use Authorizations.) But in a few cases, the NPS limited the number of entrants. Numbers in bold indicate categories in which all businesses operated with Limited Concession Permits, while the double numbers in italics indicate both non-exclusive and exclusive entrants.

* – Flightseeing was considered part of the “Air Taxi/Air Tours” category from 1981 to 1988. After 1988, figures in the top row are for air taxi only. After 2003, flightseeing was once again categorized in the “Air Taxi/Air Tours” category.

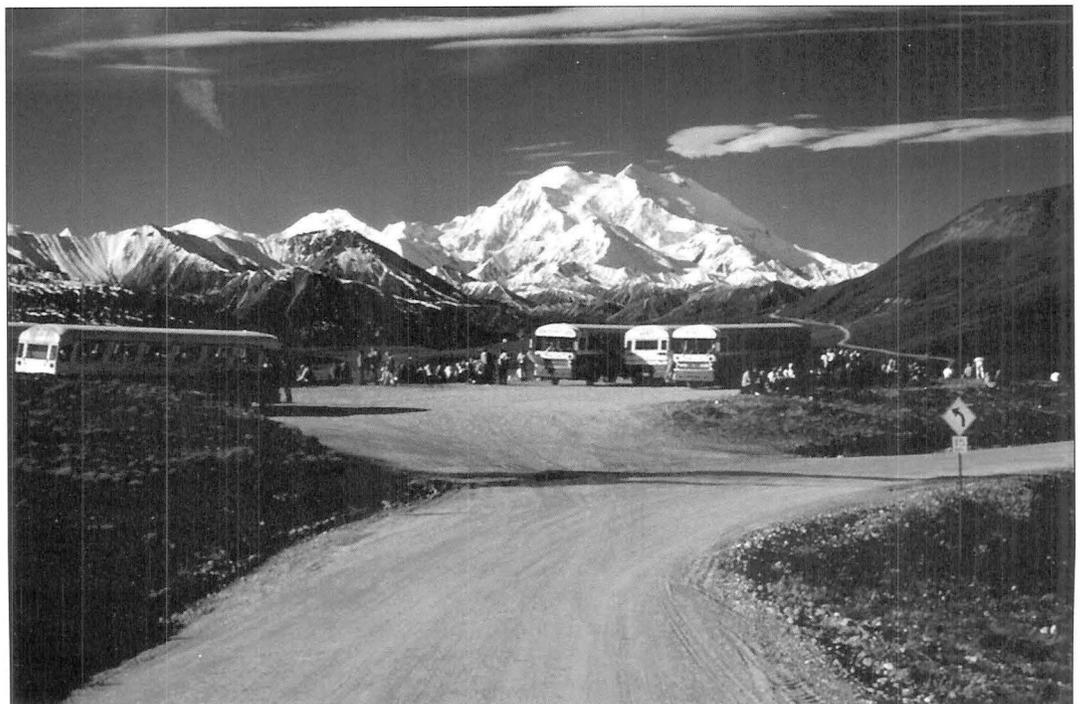
Source of data: NPS/AKSO, Commercial Visitor Service Directory, various issues, 1981-2006.

- a relocation of the store and filling station
- at Morino, replacement of the campground with a picnic area
- replacement of the railroad hostel cars with an upgraded facility at Riley Creek
- a major upgrade at “C” camp (of both housing and maintenance facilities)
- an expansion of Teklanika campground for walk-in visitors
- a reduction in size of Wonder Lake campground to eliminate sites on the knoll
- various new roadside interpretive waysides and historical restoration projects
- the eventual renovation or replacement of Eielson Visitor Center

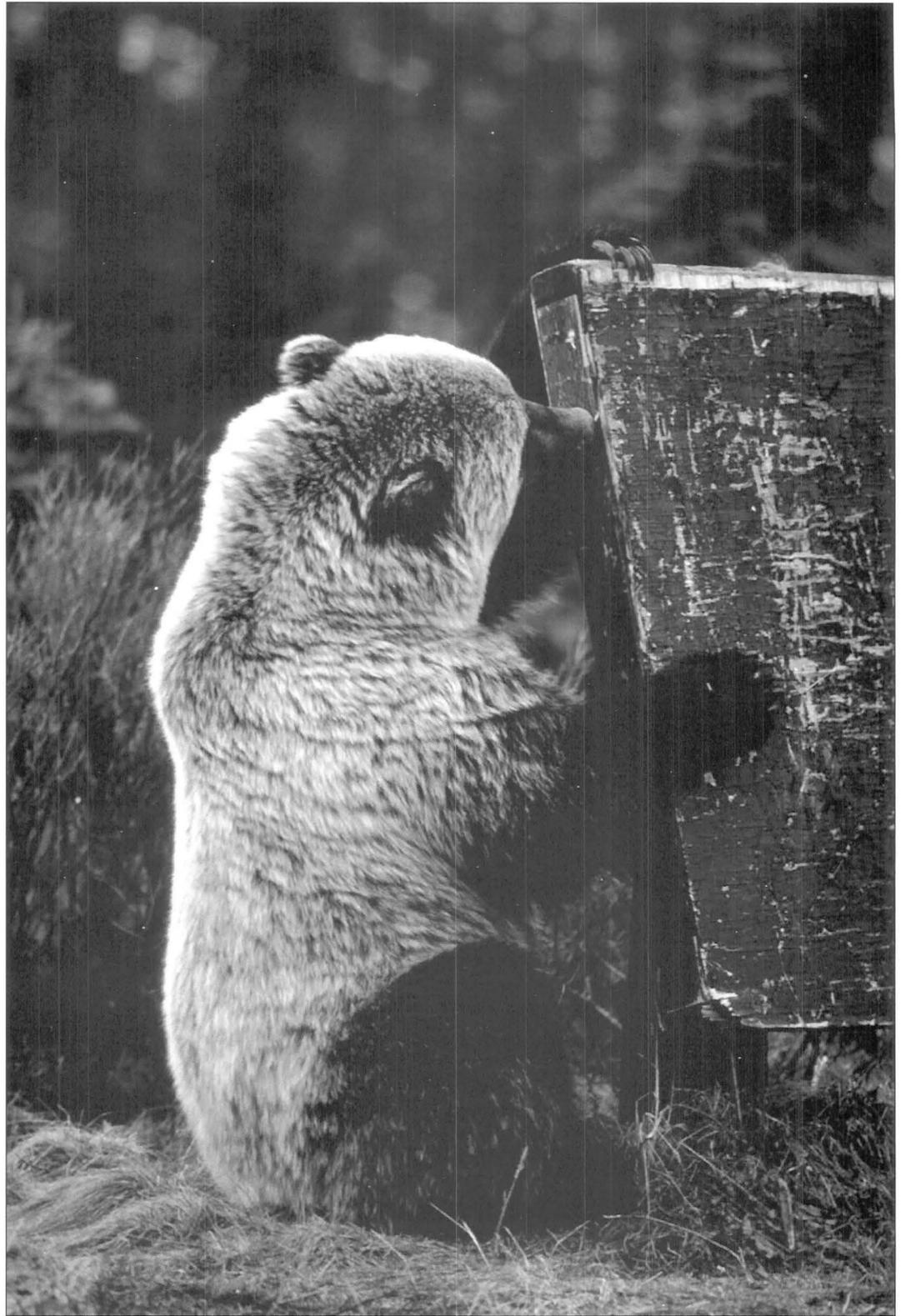
A key to the new plan was a growing recognition that the volume of buses (and thus passengers) was reaching unacceptably high levels. The report’s authors stated that “the park road corridor cannot continue to accommodate ever increasing numbers of visitors without affecting its role as the gateway to a remarkable wilderness area. ... to ensure a quality experience, the number of passengers carried on the shuttle system may have to be limited.” While “traffic along the road will be maintained at 1981 optimal levels,” they warned that “the shuttle system will not be able to serve all visitors who wish to use it,” and in order to ensure “a quality visit ... the number of visitors carried may have to be reduced.” In response to those pressures, planners took care to recommend a series of transportation and

interpretive upgrades along the 13-mile segment of paved road between the hotel and the Savage River bridge; and they further recommended the construction of a shelter and interpretive exhibits at the Primrose Ridge Wayside (mile 16.0) in anticipation of short excursions that would terminate at that point. Few large developments, by contrast, were recommended adjacent to the central and western sections of the park road.⁵⁵ The plan made no move to prohibit campers with passenger cars from staying at Sanctuary, Teklanika, Igloo, or Wonder Lake campgrounds, but planners made no moves to expand such uses either, instead emphasizing an interest in walk-in campers.⁵⁶

The Environmental Assessment (EA) was distributed beginning in May 1982, after which the public was given until the end of July to provide comments on the agency’s recommendations. Of the recommendations received, a majority expressed general support for the preferred alternative.⁵⁷ As a result, the final DCP that NPS officials approved in January 1983 was largely a duplication of the previous year’s EA. The only significant change was at Wonder Lake; while the EA had recommended that the campground be reduced at its current site, the final DCP urged that it be relocated (to just east of the park road, near the Wonder Lake spur road intersection) and expanded (from its current 20-23 sites to approximately 40 sites), with the existing campground converted to a day use area and interpretive wayside. This recommendation would not be considered final, however, pending the completion of an environmental assessment for the newly-proposed site.⁵⁸



This view shows Stony Hill Overlook on a busy summer day. Increasing visitation prompted recommendations for transportation and interpretive changes along the park road. Brad Ebel Collection



This grizzly bear is sampling a roadside interpretive sign before the protective cover has been removed in spring. Brad Ebel Collection

The DCP made a number of recommendations, several of which had first been broached in documents made preparatory to the issuance of the September 1981 concessions contract renewal. In the years to come, many of the promises made in this contract came to fruition. ARA completed a new auditorium (audio visual room) for NPS interpretive presentations in late 1982 and opened it in May 1983. This was followed by a bus main-

tenance facility in June 1984, a snack shop later that summer, and an employee dining room in 1985. The NPS helped out, too; using \$630,000 in Park Restoration and Improvements Program (PRIP) funding, it let a contract to rehabilitate the agency-owned (though concession-operated) employee dormitory. This contract, along with ancillary hotel-area support projects, was completed in 1983.⁵⁹

Once the DCP was completed, NPS planners set to work once again preparing the park's general management plan. Inasmuch as ANILCA had created ten new park areas and expanded three others, and inasmuch as Section 1301 of that act had demanded that GMPs be completed on all thirteen of these areas, there was by necessity an assembly-line quality in the way that agency planners produced these documents.⁶⁰ In practice, planners focused on four Alaska park areas first; draft GMPs for these parks were completed in 1982 and 1983, with final products issued in 1984 or early 1985.⁶¹ The other units had to wait; Denali's plan was doubtless in this latter category because agency planners had been otherwise occupied with the park road DCP.

A GMP team gathered and began work in January 1983, and the process "began in earnest" that May. The following February, the team issued a planning newsletter, and in March 1985, keeping to its self-imposed schedule, the agency released the draft park GMP.⁶² That plan offered two alternatives: 1) a continuation of present management with no new development south of the Alaska Range, and 2) developing a south-side visitor service and activity center, and a consequent reduction in private vehicle use and camping along the park road. NPS officials opted for the second alternative.⁶³ They prefaced their rationale by noting that recreational visitation between 1972 and 1984 had risen an average 25,000 visitor days per year, and also that "within the past 15 years ... the National Park Service has become aware that increasing traffic has been detrimental to opportunities for viewing wildlife along the park road corridor." They then stated that

The escalating demands on Denali's resources, coupled with the need to provide a visitor experience equal to the resources, is the single most critical problem facing park managers. The solution suggested by this plan is to expand recreational opportunities on the south side of Denali, then to modify use on the north to protect resource values. Based on current trends it is expected that the demand for use of Denali will increase by another 250,000 people per year [sic] by the end of the 10-year planning period. This amount of additional demand cannot be accommodated in the existing park road corridor without a significant decline in the visible wildlife, but it can be accommodated if the south side is developed as an alternative destination for visitors.⁶⁴

NPS officials appeared to base the goals of their plan on the results of an unpublished 1984 study, by biologists Frank Singer and Joan Beattie, that showed close correlations between increased traffic volumes and reduced opportunities to observe roadside wildlife, particularly moose and grizzly bear.⁶⁵ In order to increase wildlife viewing opportunities while simultaneously providing for increased visitation, the agency stated that it "would make additional use of the shuttle bus system and allow fewer private vehicles on the park road."

Given a 1984 flow of about 4,000 buses and 6,250 private vehicles, officials proposed during the short term that bus traffic would be allowed to increase, but total traffic could not vary from 1984 levels by more than 15 percent. Then, once new south-side facilities had been opened, additional buses would be allowed (up to 20 percent more than in 1984), but because private-vehicle traffic would be trimmed by some 45 percent, total traffic would be 17 percent less than in 1984. In order to reduce private vehicle traffic, officials planned to close three campgrounds currently open to vehicle campers—Sanctuary, Igloo, and Teklanika—primarily to "reduce... the potential for human/bear encounters in an area that already has a high incidence of problems." The small Wonder Lake Campground would remain open, however, as would campgrounds at Riley Creek and Savage River.⁶⁶ NPS officials recognized that "the proposed 20 percent increase in bus service will not be enough to accommodate all of the demand." The development of a viable south-side facility, however, would generate "additional recreational opportunities, resulting in a leveling off of demand for transportation services and accommodations in the northern part of the park." The potential to develop commercial visitor facilities in the Kantishna area was, to the NPS, admittedly worrisome because of their effect on traffic levels; thus the draft GMP stated that any such development "will be considered incompatible with the planned purposes of the park."⁶⁷

In many other ways, the draft GMP's recommendations along the road corridor were reiterations of what the NPS had suggested in its 1983 DCP. But several of the 1983 recommendations had already been implemented, as noted above, and the 1985 plan also had a few new ideas or revisions as well. The primary new recommendation was the construction of a new Denali Park Hotel, rather than renovating the existing hotel "to meet codes" as in 1983. (See section below for a more detailed discussion of this topic.) In addition, the idea of moving the Wonder Lake campground a mile away was scrapped in favor of constructing a new

This view of the Alaska Range is taken from a proposed development site on Curry Ridge. National Park Service Photo



campground adjacent to the existing one. NPS officials still advocated a new park visitor center between the railroad tracks and Alaska Highway 3; this new facility, however, was now termed a visitor access center rather than an interpretive/transportation center (as listed in the 1982-83 road corridor development concept plan).⁶⁸

The NPS's south side recommendations, however, were entirely new. Noting that "the most striking vantage point for viewing Mount McKinley through the corridor opened by the Ruth Glacier occurs on the south end of Curry Ridge," agency officials proposed the site for a "visitor service and activity center" which would include "a full service lodge oriented to views of the Alaska Range and the Chulitna River Valley." This area, apparently pushed by Alaska Division of Parks officials, was located not within the national park but on state land in Denali State Park; as a consequence, NPS officials—operating from a July 1984 cooperative agreement—fully recognized that the proposal "relies heavily upon the Alaska state park system for the implementation of an activity center." The two entities promised to work together during the final site selection process.⁶⁹ The plan implied that the public sector would construct the activity center, while private enterprise would finance and build the hotel. Although initial GMP-related ideas called for "a new road to the southern flank of Denali National Park" and "a tramway to Ruth Glacier," the draft GMP proposed little development (only primitive cabins and mountain huts) within the boundaries of the national park's south side.⁷⁰

The draft GMP was distributed to the public in early April 1985, and in early June agency officials held public meetings on the plan in various nearby cities.⁷¹ The public was given until July 15 to send comments, and at this time the Denali plan—which was still being compiled under the same timetable as eight other Alaska GMPs—was still on track to be completed in December 1985, as Sec. 1301 of ANILCA had mandated. But the response to the various Alaska park GMPs was enormous and, according to one news article, "state officials, environmental and development interests complained [that] more time was needed if all plans were to be digested and reviewed over simultaneous comment periods." As a result, the NPS (apparently with Congressional authorization) agreed on November 3 to extend the deadline. A month later, agency planners issued a series of revised draft GMPs, Denali included. They then opened a new public comment period (from December 9, 1985 through February 9, 1986) and did not complete the final park plans until late 1986.⁷²

The many changes in Denali's revised draft GMP reflected the massive number of comments that the public had provided. Several of those changes suggested significant policy shifts regarding how the agency would balance the needs of visitors while still protecting the park's wildlife and other natural values. To implement those twin goals, park officials still planned to make additional use of the shuttle bus system while allowing fewer private vehicles on the park road. Stage one of a three-stage plan called for "decreasing vehicle use by campers, professional photogra-

phers, NPS employees, and people traveling to Kantishna” by having the campgrounds west of Savage River accessible only by shuttle bus, for the shuttle bus “to be used increasingly” by NPS employees and Kantishna visitors, and for a reduction in the number of private vehicles driven by professional photographers. In stage two, which would be implemented “once an adequate number of campsites are available outside the park entrance,” the Wonder Lake Campground would remain open but the three other west-end campgrounds would close. Implementing this stage would reduce private vehicle use by 45 percent. Once that goal was reached, stage three could then begin, in which tour and shuttle bus use would “be allowed to increase to a level that does not unacceptably affect wildlife behavior.” Given this scenario, it was predicted that—as in the draft plan—bus traffic could increase 20 percent from its 1984 levels (thus allowing an additional 24,000 visitors per year) while simultaneously decreasing total park-road traffic by 17 percent.⁷³ Regarding south-side development, the revised GMP recommended only two changes in the scenario that had been outlined in the initial draft nine months earlier: the elimination of the proposed cabins and wilderness huts, and the prohibition of helicopters to access Ruth Glacier.⁷⁴

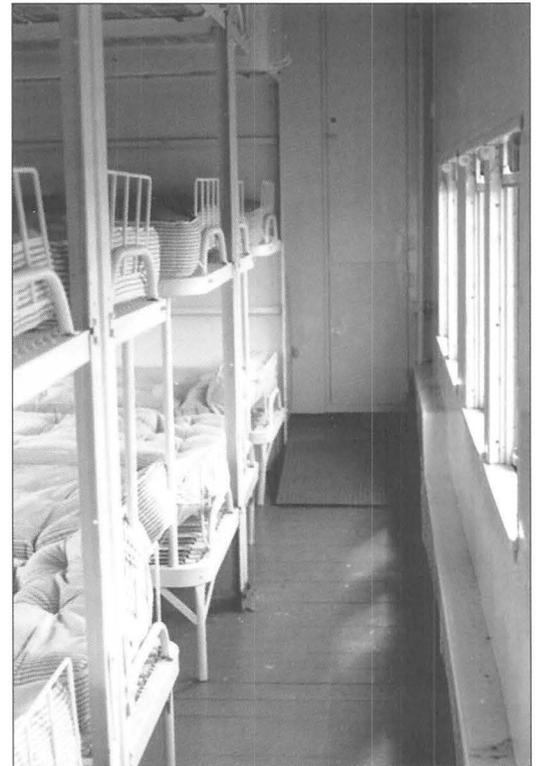
After the revised draft was released, the public was given until February 9, 1986 to provide feedback on the plan. Officials considered the new round of comments and modified the plan as needed. That June, park and regional officials approved the plan; it was then sent on to Washington, where it was approved by NPS Director William Mott in October and Assistant Interior Secretary William Horn in November.⁷⁵

The final GMP was much like the revised draft. The proposal discussed previously about shutting down three park-road campgrounds was abandoned; park authorities did, however, state that “eventually ... visitors will no longer be able to drive their private vehicles to their campsites.” The Wonder Lake Campground, it noted, would be enlarged by ten spaces.⁷⁶ And as for south-side development, all parties still favored a Curry Ridge site (within Denali State Park). However, perhaps because Alaska in 1986 was in the midst of an “oil bust” which had a catastrophic influence on the state’s finances, the final plan clearly stated the need for private enterprise—not the state or federal governments—to play a key financial role in the construction of the hotel and related facilities. It noted that

The Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation will serve as

project lead and make final decisions regarding the use of state lands. The National Park Service will work with the state in the joint development and operation of a visitor service and activity center. ... Private sector participation will be essential for the development of commercial components of the south-side development, primarily the lodge and related facilities and utilities.

The NPS, furthermore, stated that it planned to write an environmental impact statement for a south-side DCP before any development projects began in that area.⁷⁷



A key part of the public process that led to the recommendations in the final plan was the agency’s decision (advocated by the agency’s new regional director, Boyd Evison) to write a Development Concept Plan regarding the park hotel. As part of that process, NPS officials would decide whether the 13-year-old “temporary” hotel would it be replaced with a new onsite hotel, replaced with a new hotel nearby, demolished, or left as is. That process, and subsequent hotel-related events, are discussed in a section below. In addition, the plan gave a green light to many planned actions that had first been brought forth in the 1982-83 road-corridor DCP, or even earlier (such as the negotiations that led to the 1981 concessions contract). The final GMP, for example, recommended that the existing hostel (which was several railroad cars on a siding near the railroad

Meant to provide intermediate-scale accommodations, the youth hostel consisted of 3 railroad bunk cars, which were utilized from 1973 to 1987. DENA 12-78, DENA Museum Collection; NPS Interp. Collection, #453, Denali National Park & Preserve

depot) be closed. That same summer of 1986, in fact, the concessioner “was notified that for numerous safety code violations ... the railroad cars at the park hotel could no longer be used,” and the following year the old hostel cars were hauled away. And in 1991, another GMP recommendation—a new concessions housing unit, locally known as “the tapeworm,” was opened.⁷⁸ Other recommendations, however, were put off until later or were never enacted.

Wilderness and Backcountry Management

Section 1317 of ANILCA stated that Denali and other Alaska national park units needed to consider wilderness in their near-term planning efforts. It stated that

Within five years from the date of enactment of this Act, the [Interior] Secretary shall ... review, as to their suitability or nonsuitability for preservation as wilderness, all lands within units of the National Park System ... in Alaska not designated as wilderness by this Act and report his findings to the President. ... The President shall advise the Congress of his recommendations with respect to such areas within seven years from the date of enactment of this Act.

As noted in Chapter 8, Congress in its ANILCA deliberations had concluded that the vast majority of the “old park”—everything except the headquarters-entrance area, Wonder Lake and vicinity, and 150 feet on either side of the park road—would be part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.⁷⁹ The passage of ANILCA, however, set in motion a process to decide how much of the 3,813,818-acre addition to Denali National Park and Preserve should be added to the wilderness system.

Given ANILCA’s mandate, NPS officials incorporated wilderness studies as part of the general management planning process that began in 1982 and 1983, and Wilderness Suitability Review (WSR) sections were included in each of the various draft, revised draft, and final GMPs that were produced for the various Alaska NPS units in 1984, 1985, and 1986. These WSRs, at least initially, were brief and inconclusive. The WSR in Denali’s draft GMP (issued in March 1985), for example, was just three pages long. This “preliminary analysis” duly noted that “lands in other than full federal ownership are ineligible for wilderness designation,” and it further noted that the area surrounding Ruth Glacier was also ineligible “because of the nature of the visitor use proposed” for that area. The plan did not

specify any acreage figures, but the accompanying map suggested that with the exception of the Ruth Glacier corridor, virtually all of the newly-acquired park and preserve lands were “suitable for wilderness designation.”⁸⁰ The park’s revised draft GMP, issued in December 1985, was almost as vague. It stated that the Kantishna mining district was “ineligible for wilderness designation because of the disturbance to the landscape by mining and the road system,” and due to changing development priorities, planners decided that the Ruth Glacier area was now eligible for wilderness designation.⁸¹ And the final (November 1986) kept the same wilderness recommendations as the revised draft, noting that “the approximately 3.9 million acres determined suitable for wilderness designation combined with the areas already designated amount to approximately 95 percent of the park complex.”⁸² NPS staff later made a more exact accounting of these boundaries and determined that the land in the combined park and preserve that was “suitable for wilderness designation” amounted to 3,726,343 acres rather than approximately 3.9 million acres as stated in the final GMP.⁸³

Clearly a more specific process was needed to determine the wilderness viability of lands in Denali and the other Alaska parks, so in 1987 personnel from the agency’s Denver Service Center commenced an effort to prepare a series of wilderness-related environmental impact statements.⁸⁴ By February 1988 the first wilderness-related draft EISs (at other NPS units) were being published and available for public comment, and a month later, NPS officials made public their initial recommendations regarding wilderness additions at Denali.

Available information from this period suggests that the wilderness viewpoints of NPS staff contrasted sharply with those of William P. Horn, who served as the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. At one point during the process that led to the draft EIS for Denali, Alaska Regional Office (ARO) staff put forth the recommendation that of the 3.72 million acres in the wilderness study area, 3.56 million acres should be designated as wilderness. But by March 1988 the Alaska Region’s planning chief, Linda Nebel, told the local press that the agency would be recommending only 1.5 million additional acres of wilderness for Denali National Park; excluded from wilderness consideration would be an additional 900,000 acres in the “new park” and all 1.3 million acres of Denali National Preserve.⁸⁵ That recommendation, however, was still subject to change, because when the draft wilderness EIS for the unit was completed in mid-June 1988, the number of acres

recommended for wilderness had increased. Of the 3,726,343 acres in the park unit's wilderness study area, 2,254,293 acres—located entirely within the “new park”—were recommended for wilderness designation.

The acreage recommended in the June 1988 draft EIS, if enacted by Congress, meant that 93 percent of Denali National Park, and 73 percent of the combined park and preserve, would become part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. As noted above, it was a hard-fought compromise; it was 750,000 acres larger than had been recommended in March but 1.3 million acres less than ARO planners had recommended. The only park areas not recommended in the June 1988 draft EIS were six or seven isolated polygons, none comprising more than 36,000 acres, along the unit's exterior boundary. Some of these exclusions were brought about by a multiplicity of mining claims; others were to allow for the development of trail systems or public use cabins; and still others were to foster planned land exchanges. Much to the chagrin of conservation organizations, the document did not explicitly state why Denali National Preserve lands were excluded from wilderness consideration (and the agency further noted that “the purpose of this EIS is to evaluate the impacts of

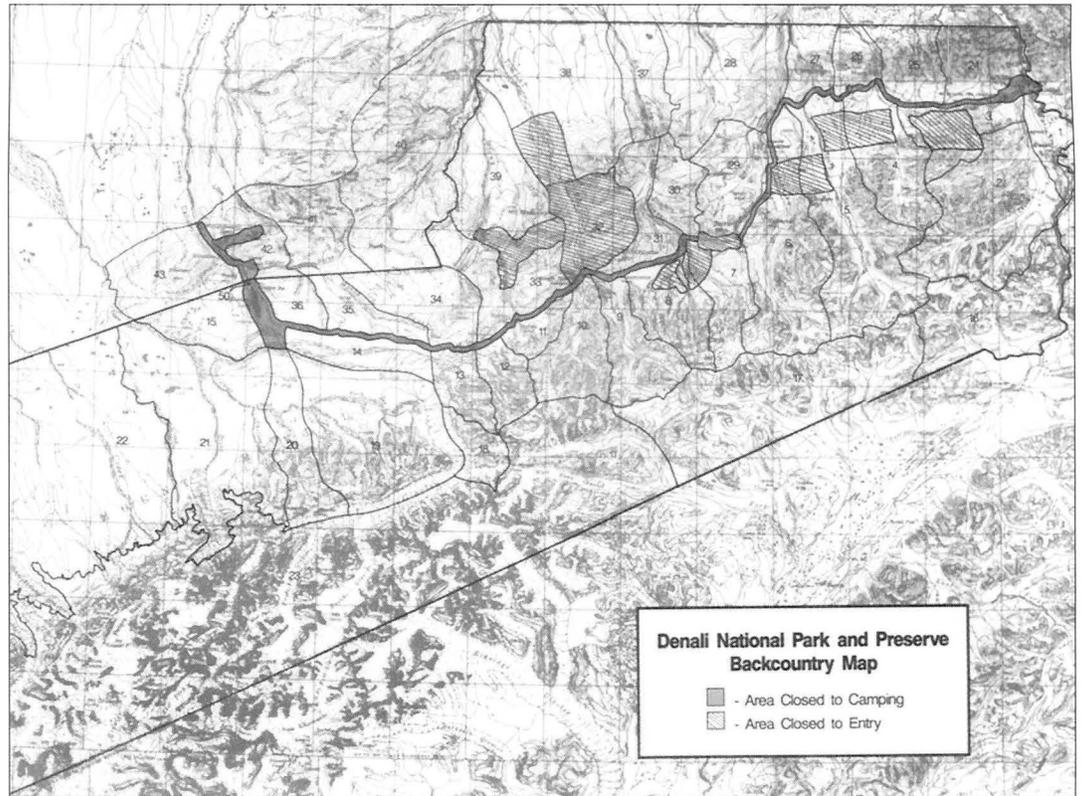
the proposed action, not to provide a justification for it”), but a diverse land ownership pattern and a desire to accommodate nearby recreational developments appear to have played key roles in the agency's decision.⁸⁶

After the agency issued its draft wilderness recommendations for Denali and the other Alaska park units, it held numerous public hearings; of those that pertained specifically to the Denali proposal, one was held in Arlington, Virginia on July 19, and three were held in Alaska (in Anchorage, Talkeetna, and Fairbanks) between July 18 and July 20. The public was given 67 days—from June 17 until August 29—to comment on these plans.⁸⁷ A month later, the NPS issued its final Denali wilderness recommendations, which were identical to those in its June 1988 draft document. On December 1, 1988, NPS Director William Penn Mott issued a record of decision recommending the addition of 2,254,293 acres within Denali National Park to the National Wilderness Preservation System. That recommendation, however, was never signed by the designated authority, who was Assistant Interior Secretary William P. Horn. As a result, the NPS's recommendation was not forwarded to the President, and Congress has not yet been given the opportunity to weigh its merits.⁸⁸

Visitors' use of the backcountry increased dramatically during the 1980s. NPS Interp. Collection, #4248, Denali National Park and Preserve



Map 1. This 43-unit version of the backcountry map was utilized from 1984 until 2006. DENA 9169, Box Z, Administrative Records Coll., Denali National Park and Preserve Museum Collection



Throughout the 1980s, and on into the 1990s, the agency continued to manage Old Park backcountry use at the field level, much as it had since the backcountry management plan had been put into effect in the mid-1970s. The use of the backcountry increased dramatically during this period, the result being that many of the more popular backcountry zones quickly filled to capacity and many would-be backpackers had to choose either less-desirable areas or avoid the most popular summertime periods. To aid in backcountry management, park staff in 1984 decided to increase the number of “old park” backcountry zones from 35 to 39. In addition, managers in the wake of ANILCA recognized that most of the “new park” located between Stampede Mine and the Brooker Mountain-Eagle Gorge area was also popular with backpackers; as a result, four new backpacking zones were added within a year or two of ANILCA’s passage (See Map. 1). These 43 zones—39 in the “old park” and another four in the “new park”—remained until 2006, when the park’s backcountry plan was approved.⁸⁹

An important aspect of backcountry management involved various land exchanges proposed for acreage in the newly-acquired portions of the park unit. As noted in previous chapters, the NPS in 1963 was able to acquire the last of the privately-owned parcels in Mount McKinley National Park. However, the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in 1980, which created a newly-expanded park and a new preserve, brought tens of thou-

sands of acres of non-federal land within the unit’s boundaries.

Two years later, an Interior Department directive called for the preparation of land management plans for all park units that contained non-federal lands. The NPS, in response, attached a land protection plan to the general management plan that was prepared between 1983 and 1986. The plan noted that the combined park and preserve contained 70,576 acres of non-federal lands, plus an additional 8,400 acres of unpatented mining claims for which the federal government owned the land but not the mineral estate. These parcels and claims were concentrated in four areas: 1) the Kantishna Hills, which contained 292 patented and unpatented mining claims, 2) the Dunkle Hills area, which contained an additional 163 unpatented mining claims, 3) an area west of Cantwell, which contained selected lands from the state and both regional and village corporations, and 4) a broad area east of Lake Minchumina, which contained a large (47,843-acre) block of regional corporation selected lands, along with scattered village corporation lands and small tract entries. Almost all of the 60,948 acres claimed by the regional or village corporations, at that time, were still in the application process; the NPS, as a result, was unsure how much of this acreage would eventually be deeded to the applicants.⁹⁰

The NPS, in its land protection plan, made four broad recommendations. 1) In the Kantishna area, the agency recognized that “the use of

patented mining claims for new visitor facilities would conflict with the objective of the general management plan to reduce the traffic in the road corridor.” It therefore decided “to acquire ... the surface estates to the mining properties to preclude large-scale recreational development.” And regarding the area’s numerous unpatented mining claims, the agency recommended the completion of validity determinations “as quickly as feasible to determine status.” 2) Along the Swift Fork at the west end of the park unit, and near the Ruth Glacier terminus, the agency recommended that the boundary be modified (through both the addition and deletion of land) in order “to follow natural geographic and hydrographic features whenever possible.” 3) It recommended that the NPS expand the park by incorporating the three “wolf townships” within its boundary. It planned to do so via a land exchange with the State of Alaska. 4) In the Dunkle Hills, an interagency work group in December 1984 recommended that “mining activities could commence on the undeveloped valid unpatented sites.” And assuming the resumption of mining activities, the NPS recommended—and the Alaska legislature similarly resolved—that the entire “Dunkle township” be deleted from the park via land exchanges. Owing to the fluid nature of the selection process as it pertained to Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act land applications, the agency made no recommendations regarding the Minchumina or Cantwell areas.⁹¹

During the 1980s, several land exchange proposals were considered between the NPS and the State of Alaska. In 1982, the state announced its intention to develop 14,000 acres of its land near McCarthy, in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. In response, the NPS offered several parcels in or near various NPS areas in the state. Two of those parcels were near Denali; one was a tract of “about 2,500 acres” just west of the Yanert Fork-Nenana River confluence, and another was “about 22,000 acres in the Ohio Creek Valley,” near Hurricane. That land swap, however, was never consummated.⁹² In the park’s 1983-84 environmental impact statements for the *Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study Report*, one alternative—which proved popular with miners and local residents—called for the deletion of the Kantishna Hills and Dunkle Mine areas from the park, perhaps in exchange for the “wolf townships” corridor.⁹³ (See Chapter 14.) This action brought forth some communication with state DNR officials along with an Alaska State Senate resolution that was introduced in January 1985 and signed by Governor Sheffield a month later.⁹⁴ And, as noted above, the agency’s 1985-86 land protection plan noted several areas that might be added to, or deleted from, the park.

In the late summer of 1987, the NPS and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources—acting on recommendations in the recently-approved park land protection plan—teamed up to recommend a series of land swaps: in the Stampede corridor (“wolf townships”) area, the Swift Fork area at the west end of the park, and in the Dunkle Mine and Ruth/Tokositna areas. During the course of six public meetings in September and October, comments were “mostly positive” regarding the proposed Swift Fork and Ruth/Tokositna boundary adjustments. But virtually everyone who attended—miners, hunters, local politicians, conservationists, and others—decried the proposal as it pertained to the Stampede and Dunkle areas.⁹⁵ Early the following year the National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA)—following up on issues raised in 1987—published a report suggesting a sweeping series of park boundary recommendations. These largely mirrored those of the land management plan. Beyond that, the NPCA report recommended several additional areas of additions and deletions to conform to “natural geographic and hydrographic features.” In the “wolf townships” area, the group recommended a fairly modest acreage addition, combined with a deletion in the townships to the north, and it also recommended a fairly substantial “Sushana/Toklat Addition” of about 60,000 acres, most of which had been included in the 1978 Denali National Monument proclamation but had been removed when the park boundaries had been finalized two years later.⁹⁶ Congress has not yet acted on any of these proposals.

Subsistence Issues

When Congress passed ANILCA in December 1980, it put Alaska park managers (and those managing other Alaska conservation areas) squarely in the business of subsistence management. Ever since the early 1970s, when the NPS had released its first master plans and environmental statements for the various proposed park areas, there had been a widespread recognition that the Alaska parks, unlike those in most of the “Lower 48” states, would be managed in a way that sanctioned the continuance of traditional lifeways—both Native and non-Native—in most if not all of the newly-established park acreage. By early 1977, when Congress began its first earnest debates of the Alaska lands question, the NPS had cobbled together a series of increasingly-sophisticated policy statements on the need for continuing subsistence activities in the proposed parklands. The various legislative bills addressing the Alaska lands question, however, were by no means consistent in their approach toward subsistence management; some urged its implementation in all of the proposed parklands,



In the 1980 park additions, the harvest of wild plants, fish and game by local residents was provided for in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. That practice continues to this day. Miki & Julie Collins Collection

while others were more selective. During the 95th Congress, the bill that passed the House in May 1978 sanctioned subsistence activities in all of the new and expanded NPS units, but the bill that emerged from the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee that October allowed subsistence only in a few proposed units, primarily those in northwestern Alaska. As mentioned in Chapter 8, however, Congress was unable to reconcile the substantial differences between

the two bills before it adjourned that year. As a result, President Carter established 17 new national monuments, including a 4.18-million-acre Denali National Monument. Shortly afterward, Interior Department officials fashioned regulations to govern the newly-established monuments; these proposed regulations noted that two nearby communities—Lake Minchumina and Telida—would be designated “resident zone communities,” where all residents would have

subsistence harvesting privileges on national monument lands.⁹⁷

Because of Congress's failure to pass a comprehensive Alaska lands bill, legislators agreed to tackle Alaska lands questions again when the 96th Congress commenced. The bill that passed the House in May 1979 sanctioned subsistence activities in all of the proposed units except Kenai Fjords National Park. The bill that emerged from the Senate in August 1980—and which became law—was more complex; it fully sanctioned subsistence activities in some units, it sanctioned subsistence in other units “where such uses are traditional,” and prohibited subsistence activities in still other units. As it pertained to Denali, two management options emerged; in the newly-added parklands, subsistence was sanctioned on a “where traditional” basis, but—because Title II did not apply to existing units—subsistence remained off-limits within the “old park” boundaries.⁹⁸

The passage of ANILCA set in motion a rapid schedule of deadlines, which were intended to institutionalize a federal subsistence management bureaucracy and to formalize subsistence-related relationships between state and federal officials. The first of these deadlines concerned the passage of NPS regulations that related to subjects with which the other park units had little experience; subsistence, along with access, were major elements covered in these new regulations. On January 19, 1981, less than two months after ANILCA was passed, the NPS issued a new “proposed rule” regarding the newly-established national park units. These proposed regulations were then subject to public comment, and on June 17, 1981, the agency issued its final regulations. One element of these final regulations stated that the new park and preserve would have four designated resident zone communities; these included Cantwell and Nikolai, as well as Lake Minchumina and Telida which had been proposed two years earlier. Not long afterward, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) agreed to set up a series of six regional advisory councils (RACs) dealing with subsistence issues, and in May 1982, Interior Secretary James Watt certified that the state's subsistence program was consistent with ANILCA guidelines.⁹⁹

More specific to park management, NPS officials recognized that Section 808 of ANILCA called for the agency to establish subsistence resource commissions (SRCs) related to Denali National Park (and six other Alaska national parks and monuments) within one year of the Act's passage. As a result, federal officials worked frantically

in late 1981 to appoint appropriate commission members.¹⁰⁰ Regional NPS official Robert Belous dutifully told an ADF&G meeting on December 1, 1981—one day before the Congressionally-imposed deadline—that the NPS had fulfilled its mission in this regard. Little more could take place with the SRCs for the time being, however; the state and the various RACs had not yet appointed their members (indeed, the various ANILCA-based RACs had not yet been formally established), and the NPS had not been provided a budget that allowed the SRCs to get off the ground. Throughout this period, most subsistence-related problems at Denali were resolved by Management Assistant Ralph Tingey and other park personnel.¹⁰¹



During the mid-1980s, subsistence management in the parks became more sophisticated when the agency hired its first staff—Louis Waller, in the regional office—whose sole job was to organize the agency's subsistence efforts. During this period, the agency was fully involved with its general management planning process, and due to Waller's influence, each iteration of the various park GMPs showed an increasing regard for subsistence-related concerns.¹⁰² Finally, the agency, in the spring of 1984, was able to actively establish the Denali National Park Subsistence Resource Commission, along with six similar commissions for other park units. Denali's first meeting, which was held in concert with the Lake Clark SRC, took place in Anchorage on May 10-11, 1984. For the next several years, meetings of this advisory body were held every six months or so.¹⁰³ Unlike several of the other SRCs, whose relationship with the NPS was often contentious, the Denali SRC cooperated with the NPS on a number of issues. Much of that cooperation was due to the presence of Florence Collins, a Lake Minchumina (later Fairbanks) resident who artfully guided the SRC for more than twenty years. The details of what this commission has accomplished are noted in another NPS publication. This advisory body continues to meet approximately twice each year at sites in and around the park.¹⁰⁴

The efforts of the Denali Subsistence Resource Commission were led and coordinated by SRC Chairperson Florence Collins and NPS Subsistence Manager Hollis Twitchell. Julie Collins Collection

Subsistence Resource Commission members and park staff worked diligently together on subsistence related issues and formulation of recommendations. NPS Photo



Controversy over Snowmachines

An issue that had more than a passing relationship with subsistence was the legal basis for snowmachine usage at Denali. As noted in Chapter 7, NPS rangers used a Bombardier snowmachine (with varying degrees of success) for patrol work between 1960 and 1963. Occasional snowmobile use continued in later years as well; as superintendent Daniel Kuehn discovered when he arrived at the park in 1973, various employees and their families owned snowmachines and used them within the park. But on April 1, 1974, the NPS implemented a regulation that prohibited snowmobile use in almost all park units. Kuehn, perhaps in response, ordered the cessation of all snowmachine use in Mount McKinley National Park.¹⁰⁵

By the early 1970s, planners for a variety of government agencies were well aware that snowmachine use among Alaskans was becoming increasingly common. The final environmental statement for the park additions, published in October 1974, made no decisions as to the legality of snowmachine use for subsistence activities, citing the need for more field study; it did, however, state that the agency would “not permit intensive recreational activities” (such as snowmobiling) “on the lands included within the park.”¹⁰⁶ President Carter’s December 1978 proclamation, which established Denali National Monument, made no mention about whether snowmachine access, or any other forms of access, would be specifically allowed; it did, however, state that “the opportunity for the local residents to engage in subsistence hunting is a value to be protected and will continue under the administration of

the monument.”¹⁰⁷ Just six months later, the NPS issued a proposed rule which established at least temporary regulatory guidance for the newly-proclaimed monuments; among its other provisions, it stated that snowmobiles “would be permitted only in specific areas or on specific routes.”¹⁰⁸

More permanent regulations regarding snowmobile usage had to await the December 1980 passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. Section 811(b) of ANILCA, following Carter’s lead, stated that “Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act or other law, the [Interior] Secretary shall permit on the public lands appropriate use for subsistence purposes of snowmobiles ... by local residents, subject to reasonable regulation.” Denali, as noted above, was a conservation unit where subsistence was sanctioned “where such uses are traditional.”¹⁰⁹ Section 110(a) of the Act gave snowmobiles an additional avenue for access to Denali. It stated that

Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act or other law, the Secretary shall permit, on conservation system units ... the use of snowmachines (during periods of adequate snow cover) ... for traditional activities (where such activities are permitted by this Act or other law) and for travel to and from villages and homesites. Such use shall be subject to reasonable regulations by the Secretary to protect the natural and other values of the conservation system units ... and

shall not be prohibited unless ... the Secretary finds that such use would be detrimental to the resource values of the unit or area.¹¹⁰

Six months after ANILCA's passage, the final park regulations—reflecting Congressional intent—stated that “the use of snowmobiles ... employed by local rural residents engaged in subsistence uses is permitted within park areas...”¹¹¹ No provisions were made for recreational snow-machiners in Alaska's parks.

NPS officials, however, came to recognize that ANILCA, for all its protections, had not prohibited recreational snowmachine access into the former Mount McKinley National Park. To correct that oversight, park officials began as early as February 1982 to craft regulations closing the “old park” to snowmachines.¹¹² By early April 1983, the Interior Department had completed its work, and it proposed in the *Federal Register* a regulation for “the permanent closure of certain areas within Denali National Park and Preserve ... to snowmobiles” and other motorized vehicles. Given that announcement, a Pandora's box of controversy ensued. Throughout this period, both user groups and conservationists had assumed that the “old park” was closed to these vehicles. The Interior Department, however, stated that ANILCA—either purposely or inadvertently—had opened the area up to snowmachine access. Specifically, Interior Department personnel closely examined Section 1110(a) of the Act and interpreted the clause to mean that “the use of snowmachines ... for traditional activities ... on conservation units” applied not only to newly-acquired parklands but to pre-1980 parklands as well. Recognizing that Section 13.30(e) allowed for “permanent closures or restrictions” on parklands after going through a public process, the department that month issued a proposed rule that was “intended to prohibit uses which will be detrimental to the resources” in “sensitive areas” at Denali. Four specific closures were involved: a ten-mile-wide corridor along the length of the park road, two areas that contained “the majority of the park's dwindling caribou herd and wolf population,” a two-mile-wide corridor in the Sable Pass area (where foot traffic would be prohibited away from the road), and several “prime denning areas for the dwindling wolf population,” which would be closed to all human access between mid-April and late September. The proposed actions would close 36 percent of the “old park” to airplane landings, snowmachines, three-wheelers and other motorized craft.¹¹³

Between April 10 and April 21, 15 public hearings were held on the proposed regulation; three of

these meetings (in Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Healy) specifically related to the Denali proposal. At those meetings, conservationists remarked that they had been taken aback by the proposal. This was not because the Department was offering to close these areas, but because they had assumed all along—and a broad variety of interest groups had long recognized—that all of the “old park” was closed to snowmobiles and other modes of off-road vehicle traffic, just as it had been before ANILCA's passage. The Alaska Congressional delegation protested just as vociferously as conservationists, but for entirely different reasons. In a letter to Interior Secretary James Watt, they stated that “Congress knew what it was doing when it opened Katmai, Glacier Bay, and Denali (formerly McKinley National Park) to motorized access.” After noting that the 1981 NPS regulations allowed closures only when motorized use would be detrimental to an area's resource values, the delegation argued that the agency had not shown sufficient cause for closing these areas. Murkowski, in a press release, further noted that “these new regulations would ... keep all but the heartiest hikers out of some of the most beautiful remote areas in Denali and Katmai National Parks. The blanket closure of these large areas appears unwarranted.”¹¹⁴

The NPS had originally announced that public comments would be accepted for 60 days, until June 6. But “in response to a number of requests for additional time,” the comment period was extended until August 6. In addition, the agency scheduled another round of seven public meetings, held between July 6 and July 28. After the public comment period closed, however, NPS officials held off on issuing a final rule.¹¹⁵ Because that rule was never issued in final form, the “old park” remained open to snowmachines. By this time, the general management planning process for each of the new and expanded park areas was well underway, and that process afforded a new opportunity, via the various park GMPs that were being prepared, to shed new light on the motorized-access issue.

Denali's final General Management Plan, issued in late 1986, stated that Executive Order 11644, which President Nixon had signed in February 1972, applied to all off-road vehicles (including snowmachines) that operated on the public lands. More specifically, Section 3 of that order required that park managers needed to specify any areas in the national park system areas that would be opened up to ORV uses, and to do so, they needed to justify that ORV use in these areas would not adversely affect the park's natural, aesthetic, or scenic values. The order, furthermore, specifically prohibited ORV routes in

designated wilderness areas. The plan also stated that “Section 1110(a) of ANILCA provides for the use of snowmachines.” (And unlike verbiage in other GMPs written during this period, the Denali GMP made no recommendation to limit either snowmachines or other ORVs to specifically designated routes.) But recreational snowmachining, to be legal, had to have been a traditional activity (as noted in Section 1110(a)), and inasmuch as snowmachines had never been commonly used, these vehicles were therefore closed from the Old Park. But because neither the executive order nor the GMP was backed up by specific regulations, the document’s recommendations were unenforceable.¹¹⁶

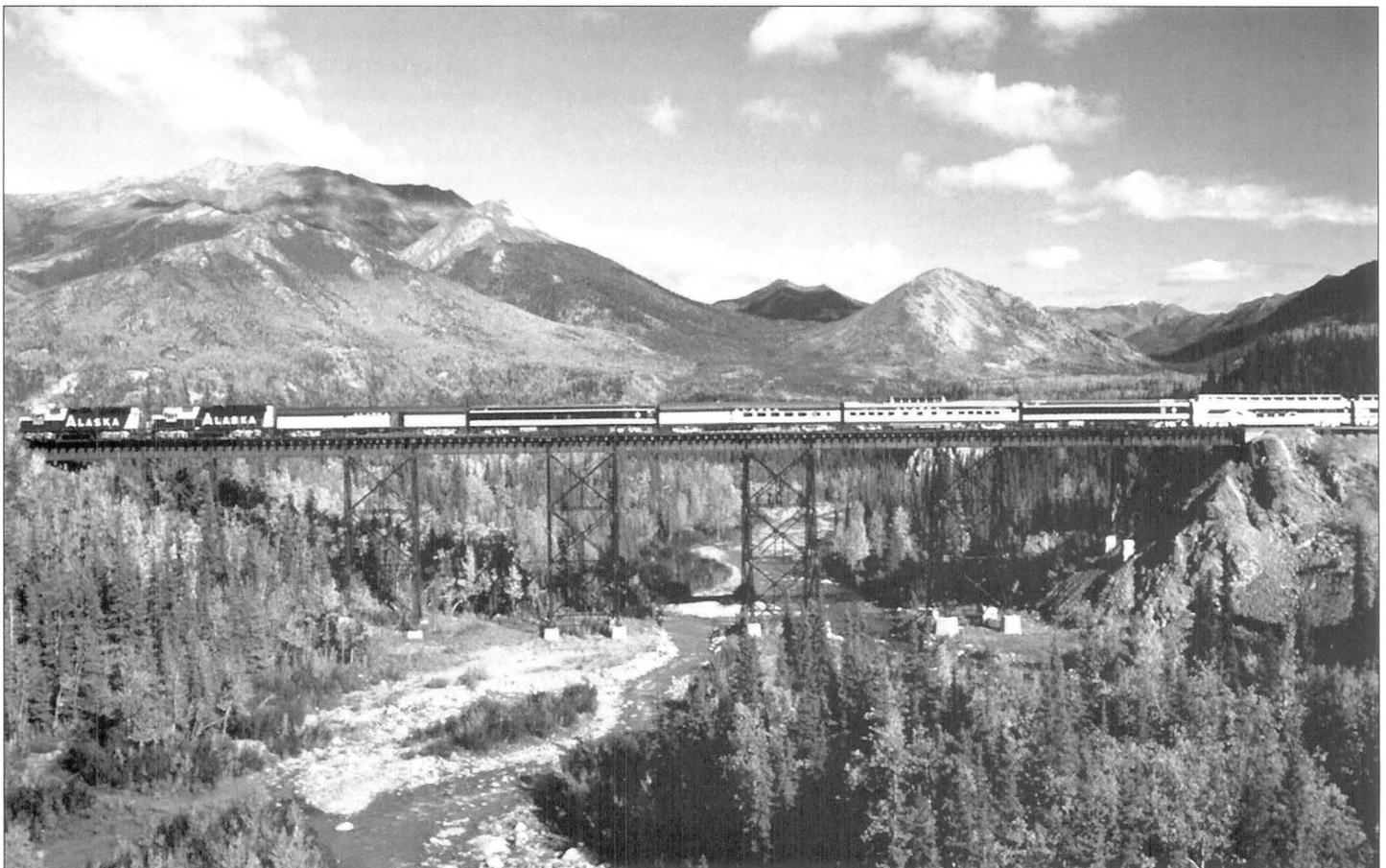
Between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s, snowmachine access into the “old park” remained a minor issue. Park staff recognized that no federal regulations prevented snowmachine riders (for recreational purposes) from entering the “old park.” But few snowmachine riders from Anchorage, Fairbanks, or other communities showed much interest in gaining access. The “old park,” therefore, witnessed little snowmachine usage during this period.¹¹⁷

Working with Park Neighbors

Prior to the 1970s, as noted in Chapters 6 and 7, park staff at Mount McKinley lived and worked in

relative isolation from the outside world. The early 1970s, to be sure, saw some loosening of this isolation with the completion of the Parks Highway. By the end of the decade (see Chapter 8), commercial developments were beginning to spring up along the mile-long strip just north of the Nenana River’s third crossing bridge (at Mile 238) as well as in the long road corridor between Cantwell and the second crossing bridge (at Mile 231). The number of nearby residents was still small; several of these residents, moreover, were present and former NPS employees. There were relatively few instances in which NPS employees interacted (or felt the need to interact) with residents of Cantwell, Healy, and other nearby communities. Public meetings and smaller informal gatherings related to the proposed Alaska lands bill provided some opportunities for local residents to speak with NPS officials, and on a more informal level, NPS employees with school-aged children spent time at Healy’s Tri-Valley School.¹¹⁸ The 1980s, however, was a different story, and NPS staff found numerous opportunities to work and partner with its neighbors. The primary matters of mutual interest between the park and its neighbors concerned the Alaska Railroad and its ownership transfer; the formation of the Denali Borough; the proposed Healy “clean coal” plant; the establishment of the Denali Foundation; and the establishment and maintenance of a local medical presence.

Tom Habecker Collection
The Alaska Railroad crosses Riley
Creek just south of the McKinley
Station Depot. Tom Habecker
Collection



During the early to mid-1980s, the National Park Service worked with the State of Alaska officials as part of a process that culminated in the Alaska Railroad's transfer from the federal to the state governments. The Alaska Railroad, of course, had played an integral role in providing access to the park ever since the early 1920s, and until the early 1950s the railroad had also played a key role in park development projects, including the management of both the park hotel and the tour bus operation. The railroad had been an Interior Department entity until 1967, when it was transferred to the Federal Railroad Administration within the new Department of Transportation.

Throughout this period, the railroad was responsible for bringing a large majority of visitors to the park; as noted above, the railroad had been virtually the only way to access the park until the Denali Highway was opened in 1957, and this long-distance dirt road was the only non-rail link to the park until the fall of 1971, when the Parks Highway was opened. Although the completion of this highway considerably eased access to the park for residents of Anchorage, Fairbanks, and other railbelt communities, a considerable number of park visitors—many of them on package tours—continued to reach the park by rail during the 1970s and early 1980s. But despite the railroad's increasing popularity with Outside visitors, the line had a consistently negative cash flow.

During this same period, Congress began to re-examine the paternal relations that it had long kept with the nation's various transportation modes. Until the mid-1970s, the Federal government had closely regulated the airline, trucking, and railroad industries; it had a strong role in transportation mergers, rates, line abandonments, and related matters. But encouraged in large part by the crisis that the U.S. railroads endured beginning in the late 1960s, Congress passed a series of acts that played a major role in deregulating the principal transportation industries. These efforts included the Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act of 1976, the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978, the Staggers Rail Act of 1980, and the Motor Carrier Act of 1980.

These bills had their effect on Alaska as well. Congress, in 1980, had tacked a provision onto Title VII of the Staggers Rail Act asking the Interstate Commerce Commission to investigate whether the Alaska Railroad's rate structure was out of line. The following July, after the dust from ANILCA had finally settled, Alaska's Congressional delegation made a bold move: it introduced bills "directing the Secretary [of Transportation] to transfer the Alaska Railroad

to the State of Alaska before October 1, 1982." Such an action was logical given the prevailing deregulatory climate, the Alaska Railroad's public ownership, its poor economic performance, and the state's excellent financial position in the wake of the Alaska Pipeline.

The various bills submitted in 1981 enjoyed varying degrees of success. Rep. Don Young's bill (H.R. 4278) made little headway, but the language in his bill was soon incorporated into a larger bill (H.R. 6308) related to Amtrak issues in the Northeast Corridor. That bill passed the House but bogged down in the Senate. Alaska's senior senator, Ted Stevens, had better luck with his bill, S. 1500. Just a month after he introduced it, Stevens's bill received a two-day hearing in the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. After ten months of behind-the-scenes work, the bill was "ordered to be reported with an amendment in the nature of a substitute favorably," and in late June 1982 Robert Packwood (R-Ore.), the Committee chair, brought it up to the full Senate. On December 21, in the last days of the 97th Congress, Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio)—who had previously had some strong disagreements with Stevens regarding various aspects of S. 1500, agreed to submit a new bill (which, like Young's bill, dealt primarily with Northeast Corridor rail operations) that incorporated most of Stevens's bill. That bill, in turn, was folded into an even larger bill dealing with pipeline safety.¹¹⁹ In one dizzying day, this bill was introduced, it passed the Senate, and the House agreed to the newly-passed Senate substitute. The new bill was then forwarded on to President Ronald Reagan, who signed the bill on January 14, 1983. What had been previously known as the "Alaska Railroad Transfer Act of 1982" became Title VI of the pipeline safety act.¹²⁰

The new law provided for a transition period during which the U.S. Secretary of Transportation and the Alaska Governor would prepare, and jointly present to Congress, a report on all railroad properties that were subject to transfer. That report, by Secretary Elizabeth Dole and Governor Bill Sheffield, was completed and signed on July 15, 1983. The following May, the Alaska legislature passed a bill (SB 10) authorizing Sheffield to negotiate with the federal government about the transfer, and two months later, Sheffield established the Alaska Railroad Corporation. Having met all requirements pursuant to Congress's January 1983 act, the Alaska Railroad was transferred from the federal to the state government on January 5, 1985.¹²¹

This act had two specific park-related provisions. Section 604(b)(1)(d), combined with Section 612

The Alaska Railroad has been bringing visitors to the park since 1922. NPS Interp. Collection, #479, Denali National Park and Preserve



noted that the railroad right-of-way would “be transferred to the Secretary of the Interior for administration as part of the Denali National Park and Preserve.” The state, however, would be able to use, without compensation, lands along the railroad right-of-way within the park’s boundary necessary for its tracks, terminal, and other existing facilities. This use, however, was subject to federal laws and regulations that protected park resources. In addition, Section 604(c)(3) of the bill recognized that the NPS would be able to continue its use of railroad land at Talkeetna for park administrative purposes (see Chapter 13). The agency had been leasing a 50’ x 100’ parcel near the railroad depot since April 1980 (and had been paying the railroad \$600 per year for the privilege), but language in the transfer act allowed the NPS to use and occupy the parcel without compensation.¹²²

Not long after the railroad issue was resolved, the park and its neighbors pondered a new issue: whether a new borough should be established in the area. In the spring of 1987, Matanuska-Susitna Borough Manager John Hale first suggested changing the borough’s name to Denali and extending its boundaries north to include Mount McKinley. A year later, however, officials in Nenana asked the state to study a different plan, one that would create a new borough extending south from Nenana to Mat-Su’s northern boundary and thus include Mount McKinley and most of the park unit. The Nenana officials’ proposal was formulated by a desire to unite Nenana, Cantwell, and Anderson on issues before the state government; in addition, it was a defensive

action intended to prevent Mat-Su borough from extending too far north. Later in 1988, Hale revived his proposal, and borough assemblymen backed him to some degree; one, Ted Smith, dryly noted that the present name was “certainly descriptive, but it doesn’t actually inspire the imagination.” Mat-Su planners who had studied the matter concluded that it would probably raise more money than it would cost; Nenana officials countered that they hoped to keep the area’s tax base within their orbit.¹²³

In January 1989, Mat-Su upped the ante when the borough assembly passed a resolution asking that the state drop its Nenana study until Mat-Su could complete its own. That, however, brought forth a protest from residents of Healy and surrounding areas (including some NPS staff), who on September 7 filed for the creation of a new Denali Borough based in Healy. And in October of that year, a Nenana-based group filed a new proposal for a “Valley Borough” that would encompass most of the territory between Mat-Su and the Fairbanks North Star boroughs. As a result of these actions, the state’s Department of Community and Regional Affairs (DCRA) had to consider three petitions for the McKinley-Railbelt region: a Mat-Su extension proposal and proposals for new boroughs based in either Healy or Nenana. As one Healy meeting attendee frankly admitted, “I think everybody sitting at this table would just as soon have no government.” Another, however, recognized that “we’re all here because Mat-Su is trying to annex this area ... our mission here is to block that an-

nexation so that they don't draw revenue from our area and take our local control."¹²⁴

On December 30, 1989, DCRA weighed in with its decision. In a draft report, it decided in favor of Healy's proposal, thus rejecting plans from both Nenana and Mat-Su. That proposal, it noted, made good economic sense. But while the Department's report rejected the Nenana-based proposal, the report ironically noted that DCRA would welcome the addition of the Nenana area to the Healy-based proposal—assuming, of course, that Nenana residents backed the idea.¹²⁵

The Denali Borough, with Healy as its seat of government, was established on December 7, 1990. Its boundaries included more than two-thirds of Denali National Park and Preserve and comprised six main population clusters: Anderson/Clear, Ferry, Lignite, Healy, Denali National Park/McKinley Village, and Cantwell. Its year-round population that year, according to U.S. Census figures, was 1,441, and more than half of that population was located within five miles of the park boundary. The borough, moreover, decided that its primary revenue source—at least in its early years—would be a tax on overnight accommodations; thus revenues generated by park visitors played a major role in financing borough operations.¹²⁶

The NPS also worked with park neighbors on the long running Healy "clean coal" power plant proposal. Coal had been mined at Suntrana since the early 1920s, and since 1943 the Usibelli Coal Mine had been active; both mines were located along Healy Creek east of Healy. Coal mining remained active in the Healy area for the next several decades, and in 1967 the Golden Valley Electric Association (the Fairbanks area's primary electric utility) opened a 25 megawatt power plant adjacent to the Usibelli mine.¹²⁷

In 1989, a potential new source for electric power loomed in the region when several entities—the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA), Golden Valley Electric Association (GVEA), Usibelli Coal Mine, and others—submitted an application to the U.S. Department of Energy to fund a 50 megawatt power plant at Healy under the federal Clean Coal Technology program. (Officials pitched the idea that a Healy plant could "demonstrate how to burn coal for energy without spewing out the pollutants most responsible for acid rain: sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides.") Later that year, the DOE selected the so-called Healy Clean Coal Project for federal funding.¹²⁸ Plans called for the construction of a \$161-million-plus plant (\$93 million of it from DOE), to be completed in 1995.¹²⁹

Problems, however, dogged the project from its earliest days. Project proponents spoke of diversifying the Railbelt's energy base, attaining energy independence for Interior Alaska, and benefiting economically from plant construction activity. But opponents—of which there were many—claimed that the project was economically absurd because it would force Interior residents to pay high electrical rates at a time when low-cost electricity was plentifully available. The project also pitted utility against utility and natural gas producers against Usibelli Mine; in addition, according to one account, it became "another front in the seemingly endless war between Anchorage and Fairbanks over regional dominance."¹³⁰ In addition, financing became a problem; by early 1991, the project tab had risen to \$193 million, and non-federal sources were unable to raise \$35 million in necessary project funding. Although Congress approved project funding that April, an Anchorage newspaper editorial noted that the financing package was "a dubious deal at best" and "a case of federal pork-grubbing gone awry."¹³¹

By the end of 1991, the plant's price tag had risen to \$198.5 million and its estimated completion date had been pushed back to 1996, and just three months later the "roughly \$200 million" project had an estimated 1997 start date. The project was now pitting Chugach Electric Association (in Anchorage) against GVEA (in Fairbanks); in addition, environmental groups were lining up against the plant because any coal plant in that area threatened the park's air and water.¹³² Despite all that opposition, the Alaska Public Utilities Commission approved a key marketing contract (between the plant and GVEA) in September 1992.¹³³

Next to weigh in on the project were National Park Service officials who shared environmentalists' concerns—specifically, that emissions from the plant would threaten the region's pristine air quality. They noted that park visitors would have their scenic views tainted by the plant's smoke plume, and in February 1993, the Interior Department issued a notice that emissions from the proposed power plan would have an adverse impact on the park's air quality. Because of additional concerns with the park's "terrestrial and aquatic resources," it recommended that the plant's air quality permit be denied.¹³⁴ Project sponsors, upon receiving that recommendation, worked with Interior Department officials to meet their concerns. They promised to reduce emissions on their existing Healy power plant to such a degree that, when the new plant was up and running, the total emissions from both plants would be close to then-current levels. Based on those assurances, the federal government, state

In 1993 the first Intergenerational Elderhostel group was hosted at the Denali Foundation campus. Elderhostel Collection, Denali Education Center



government, and GVEA signed a Memorandum of Agreement to that effect on November 9, 1993, and the following March, Energy Department officials agreed to spend about \$110 million to fulfill their role in constructing the \$227 million plant.¹³⁵ By this time, Trustees for Alaska (a group of lawyers advocating for environmental protection) had challenged the project in the Alaska Supreme Court. But in June 1994, Trustees reached an out-of-court settlement with project developers that allowed plant construction to proceed, and in May 1995 construction on the \$267 million generating plant finally got underway.¹³⁶ Details of plant operations are noted in Chapter 10.

Yet another way in which NPS officials interacted with its park neighbors was in the establishment of the Denali Foundation. As noted in Chapter 8, residents in areas surrounding the park—and some in areas as far away as Anchorage and Fairbanks—had banded together in April 1974 to establish the Denali Citizens Council. That group, which was “honestly concerned and interested in protecting the unique values of McKinley Park and region surrounding it,” has remained active to the present day. During the late 1980s, however, it was felt that a new organization was necessary: one more related to interpretation and education rather than specific lobbying activities, and one that appealed to Outsiders as well as Railbelt residents. That new organization, the Denali Foundation, was incorporated in November 1989, largely through the efforts of

park superintendent Robert C. Cunningham and longtime concessioner George Fleharty. These two men had been working together for nine years and had an excellent working relationship; the Foundation, to some extent, was a logical extension of Fleharty’s interest in expanding the park’s Elderhostel program,¹³⁷ combined with Cunningham’s interest in having a home-away-from-home for scientists conducting research in the park.

The self-stated purpose of the Denali Foundation was “to develop and implement research, education and communication programs that benefit the Denali Park region, the state of Alaska, and our planet. We believe that wilderness provides an educational opportunity to teach and to share values common to all of us.” Cunningham also hoped, through this program, to develop a group of park defenders. As he noted in a recent book, “I was looking for allies to support regulations that would prevent the degradation of Denali National Park.” Thus after Fleharty approached him with the Elderhostel concept, “I immediately supported George’s idea because I saw the opportunity to possibly recruit supporters from around the world to be an environmental voice for the park.”¹³⁸ Fleharty also provided the new organization a long-term home; as part of ARA’s 1987 purchase of the 27-acre McKinley Village property from Linda Crabb, he reserved 10 acres of that parcel for the Denali Foundation, as well as housing for ARA employees.¹³⁹

Since its founding, the Denali Foundation has established a broad network of programs designed for all ages. Elderhostel programs at the park, which had begun in 1984, were incorporated into the Foundation beginning in 1990. That same year, a new Elderhostel campus was erected at McKinley Village. And a third major aspect of the Foundation's program—communicating the results of scientific research to the public—has resulted in a lecture program that brings scores of scientists to the lectern each summer for lectures, films, cultural demonstrations, and other presentations. The Foundation also offers programs tailored to meet the needs of local residents, both children and adults, and it also sponsors various wilderness education programs. Since 1992, this organization has partnered with the NPS via a cooperative agreement, but no government funds are specifically allotted to fund Denali Foundation activities.¹⁴⁰ During the winter of 2006-2007, the Denali Foundation changed its name to the Denali Education Center in order to more appropriately state its emphasis on educational programming.¹⁴¹

Finally, the NPS worked with park neighbors to establish a medical facility in the park vicinity. During the 1970s, park rangers and other local employees (both NPS and concessions staff) were trained in first aid and rescue techniques; in addition, the concessioner supported a registered nurse, who worked out of the park hotel. Otherwise, the nearest medical specialist was a physician's assistant (PA) located in Healy, some 12 miles north of the park hotel. (The Tri-Valley Community Center was completed in the late 1970s, and John Winkleman, the local PA, had his office in that building.) But given the explosion in annual park visitation during the 1970s

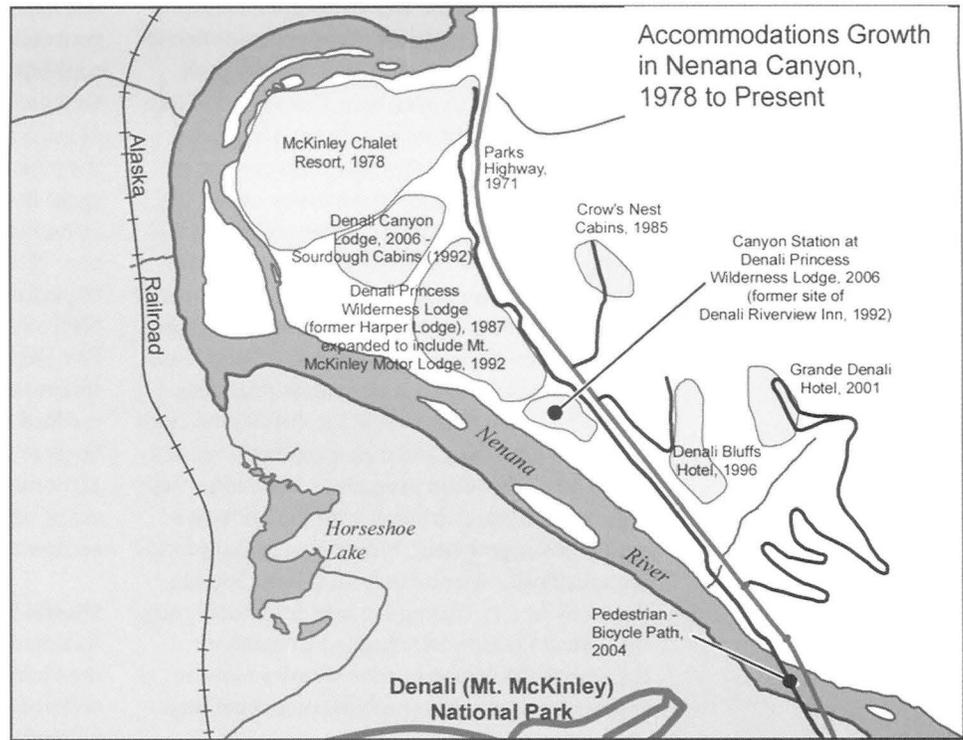
and early 1980s, both NPS officials and the park concessioner became acutely aware that a more sophisticated medical presence was necessary. So when a retired thoracic surgeon from New Mexico arrived at the park in the spring of 1985, the park community welcomed his presence; he spent the summer providing volunteer emergency medical services to park visitors and employees. The physician returned the following year to perform the same services.¹⁴² And in 1987, the NPS established agreements with the Tri-Valley Fire Department so that the hotel and headquarters areas would have better fire and emergency medical service protection.¹⁴³ These services became increasingly sophisticated in later years. Most medical services pertained to minor diseases, physical ailments, disease prevention, and accident responses.¹⁴⁴

Shuttle Bus Capacity Issues

As noted in Chapter 8, the mile-long stretch of the Parks Highway just north of its intersection with the park road witnessed the first inklings of commercial development soon after the highway was completed in the early 1970s. For the next several years, only a few scattered residences were seen. But in the spring of 1978, Outdoor World Ltd. opened the first unit of the McKinley Chalets, and by the end of 1980, the NPS noted that "three new hotel units were utilized, and construction on a gift shop, lobby, restaurant, and lounge" was underway at the hotel. These improvements soon spawned ancillary developments, and by 1983 the park superintendent stated that "a major tourist industry is springing up." Soon after the hotel was completed, "numerous small businesses mushroomed around the area: taco stands, horse rides, two campgrounds, two other 24-unit motels, and a liquor store. ... All



The Denali Foundation's 90-seat lecture hall and offices, completed in 1998 with over 4,000 hours of volunteer effort, are located in the Charles Sheldon Center, named in honor of the founder of Denali National Park. Denali Education Center Collection



Map 2. Accommodations Growth in Nenana Canyon, 1978 to Present.

these additional tourist facilities,” he added, “will have an increased impact on the park road corridor.” (See Map 2.) The mid-1980s brought new businesses to the mile-long strip, locally called Healy Canyon, Nenana Canyon, or simply “the canyon;” the 1985 construction of a series of tourist cabins on the slopes of Sugar Loaf Mountain increased the width of the commercial corridor and portended future developments upslope from the Parks Highway.¹⁴⁵

In late 1986, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the NPS completed a general management plan for the park. A key aspect of that plan was a proposal to allow an increased use of bus traffic—up to 20 percent higher than had been recorded in 1984—while simultaneously cutting back on private vehicle traffic. The agency planned a sequential three-step approach to implementing its road-corridor traffic plan, and although the plan did not give a specific time horizon, NPS officials generally agreed that five years or more would be needed for its full implementation. In 1986, however, two major events took place: ARA (the successor to Outdoor World) added 36 rooms to the McKinley Chalets, and Princess Tours began to construct the 154-bed Harper Lodge, which was slated for completion in the spring of 1987.¹⁴⁶

The construction of this lodge promised to put further pressure on the bus traffic over the park road. In response, therefore, park officials decided to immediately implement the first stage of the GMP’s traffic plan. As a result, park officials in 1987 added 15 percent more capacity

to the combined tour bus and shuttle bus fleets, but they also imposed severe reductions on park road traffic by agency and concessions employees, Kantishna lodge owners and claim holders, and professional photographers. By severely rationalizing long-established access and offering prudent alternatives, the agency was able to generally meet the traffic targets that the GMP had outlined.¹⁴⁷

Despite the fact that the traffic plan allowed for substantial growth in bus capacity, the increased numbers were still insufficient to meet peak season needs, and some park visitors were inconvenienced. In 1985, the first year in which the agency adhered to its bus-capacity limits, a few mid-season visitors were turned away. The following year, according to a government report, “approximately 1,500 visitors were unable to obtain shuttle bus seats on the day they arrived,” and “long lines at early hours were commonplace.” (Some of these visitors were particularly chagrined at the lack of bus capacity, inasmuch as they had obtained campground reservations via a newly-installed Ticketron system but were unable to access their campsites.) Long lines continued until 1988, when the park instituted a shuttle bus reservation system that offered a 24-hour lead time for reservations.¹⁴⁸

For the remainder of the decade, the agency did its best to meet the GMP’s traffic goals. Pressures on the road, however, built ever greater. By 1988, Denali recreational visitation—at 592,431—reached its greatest total ever. A year later, the



Tom Habecker Collection
 The new Kantishna Roadhouse lodge building is located in the area of the gold rush town site of Eureka, now called Kantishna. Tom Habecker Collection

park superintendent remarked that “local hotels continued to build additional rooms,” and he further remarked that the boom in “wholesale tourism development on the eastern boundary” continued into the early 1990s.¹⁴⁹ Tourism growth was also taking place in the Kantishna area. Beginning about 1983, Roberta Wilson first brought tourists to her Kantishna Roadhouse property,¹⁵⁰ and in the late 1980s the new North Face Lodge owners made substantial renovations to their property.¹⁵¹ Another new hostelry, opened in 1989, was the Denali Mountain Lodge, located near the Kantishna Airstrip.¹⁵² During this period, the capacity of all of these hostelries remained relatively modest; even so, sustaining those operations put additional strains on the park road’s capacity.

Park officials, trying to remain under the capacity limits, continued to limit private vehicle traffic according to methods inaugurated in 1987. But they also did what they could to implement stages 2 and 3 of the GMP’s traffic plan. Specifically, they allowed additional passengers (though not additional buses) by allowing both the concessioner and the shuttle-bus operator to use larger-sized buses.¹⁵³ In the summer of 1988, regional-office wildlife biologist Dale Taylor began the first phase of a four-year study that, like the previous Tracy-Dean and Singer-Beattie studies, monitored the impact of road traffic on the park’s wildlife.¹⁵⁴

Beginning in 1989, the superintendent began a public process that gradually phased out motorized access to most of the park campgrounds located west of Savage River. The first step in this

process took place in the summer of 1989, when the Wonder Lake Campground was relocated from the knoll top to areas nearer the lake; because of ongoing construction, the agency closed the campground to all visitors. The following year, NPS provided ten additional Wonder Lake campsites; this larger facility, however, remained closed to motorized camping. In January 1990, the agency announced additional closures; at a series of public meetings, the agency said that it would close Teklanika and Sanctuary campgrounds to motorists as “part of a long-term plan to reduce vehicle traffic because of its effect on Denali’s renowned wildlife.” Superintendent Berry noted that these actions were a logical follow-up to recommendations made in the 1986 GMP. The agency’s plans, predictably, aroused scattered public grumbling; perhaps as a result of those protests, campers retained their ability to drive to Teklanika Campground, though they would now be limited to a 3-day minimum stay. Starting in 1990, all park campgrounds west of Savage River were closed to drive-in camping.¹⁵⁵

The NPS, during this period, effectively served as a community center for local residents, whether park employees or not. As noted in Chapter 7, a six-unit apartment building had been built at headquarters in 1958, and ever since that time, the recreation room in that building had served as an informal meeting room and social center. Seasonal parties, dances, movie nights, and other community social events were held there until 1983, when work began on the state-sponsored McKinley Village Community Center, located between McKinley Village and the Denali (Lingo) Airstrip. (The center opened

The Denali Fruit Express, privately owned and operated by Denise Taylor (pictured on the right), brought fresh produce, baked goods, coffee and good cheer to the park vicinity every week during the summer season. Denise Taylor Collection



in 1984.) NPS employees also played key roles in organizing and supporting various other community events, including the Pygmy Tundra Buffalo Run (a half-marathon race begun in the mid-1970s), the Panguingue Creek Co-op (for bulk foods), and the “Denali Fruit Express” (which since 1981 has brought perishable foods to the area from Anchorage and the Palmer area on a regularly-scheduled basis).¹⁵⁶

A final way in which the NPS responded to the ever-greater demands for park-road visitation was to work with the concessioner on a new tour, one that would go no farther than Primrose Ridge. The idea was conceived, developed and approved during the mid-1980s, but not implemented until 1990.¹⁵⁷ Park management assistant Ralph Tingey, who helped develop the tour, reasoned that many park visitors had little interest in a long bus ride; they did, however, want a clear view of Mount McKinley. The Savage River check station (which at that time was just west of Savage River Campground) offered such a view; this location, however, did not have a spot where buses could turn around. Primrose Ridge, located 1.2 miles beyond the Savage River bridge, offered both a turnaround loop and a panoramic Mount McKinley vista. This site, moreover, was just 3.2 miles beyond Savage River Bridge, where the check station was sited beginning in 1990. NPS officials felt that a 3.2-mile segment was sufficiently short that bus trips terminating at Primrose Ridge should not impact the park road’s bus capacity ceiling. This “Natural History Tour” initially had few patrons,

but by the mid-1990s it was carrying almost as many visitors as the Tundra Wildlife Tour and the shuttle bus.¹⁵⁸

In addition to capacity pressures, cost pressures were also a growing bus-system problem. As noted in Chapter 8, the shuttle buses beginning in 1972 had been run by the concessioner on a “cost plus” contract. A year later the NPS, hoping to guarantee greater reliability than the concessioner had thus far provided, made the first of several attempts to purchase its own fleet of shuttle buses. In 1975, however, the General Services Administration flatly rejected that request.¹⁵⁹ Due to ballooning costs—brought on by a lack of incentive to restrain expenses—the agency in 1982 implemented a year-to-year contract system, and since then several different companies had supplied the park with its shuttle bus fleet. But the explosion in visitation during the 1980s resulted in ever-higher costs to the bus contractor.¹⁶⁰ In 1991 these costs became a critical park issue because the park budget provided \$1.3 million for the shuttle bus contract, but the lowest bid submitted to fulfill that contract totaled \$1.8 million. The superintendent reluctantly accepted that bid. He noted, in his year-end report, that the terms of the contract were fulfilled “through careful accumulation of lapse monies and assistance from the region.”¹⁶¹ NPS officials recognized that the bus contract’s fiscal arrangements were untenable and needed to be changed.

Park officials, looking for a way out of its fiscal crisis, recognized that the Concessions Policy Act

The Denali Natural History Tour destination at Primrose Pullout provides a panoramic view of the Alaska Range, as seen in this 1998 photo. Courtesy of Doyon/ARAMARK Joint Venture



of 1965 demanded that the NPS, each five years, needed to reconsider the concessioner's franchise fees.¹⁶² Given that law, the NPS in 1992 began discussions with ARA Leisure Services, Inc. regarding a renegotiation of its franchise fee. A key aspect of those negotiations was to allow the concessioner to operate the shuttle-bus system. This arrangement, as noted above, had been in place between 1972 (when the shuttle bus system was inaugurated) and 1981. What made the new proposal substantially different, however, was that the concessioner would assume total control of the shuttle-bus operation; it would purchase its own fleet of shuttle buses, hire its own drivers, and charge visitors a break-even rate for shuttle bus use. It would also require the concessioner to invest in new employee housing and to install new bus maintenance facilities. The amendment was advantageous to the NPS in two key ways; it resulted in a sharp spike in the franchise fee that concessioner paid to the government—from 0.75 percent up to 12 percent—and it also allowed the NPS to divert its annual \$1.1 million bus system expenses to other park-related purposes. To the park visitor, the proposed amendment to the 1981 concessions contract promised newer buses and thus a more comfortable ride down the park road; the cost of that ride, however, would swell from the current \$4 entrance fee (regardless of length) to a more expensive trip, with costs dependent on distance: passengers bound for Eielson would be charged \$20, for example, while Wonder Lake passengers would pay \$30.¹⁶³

Both parties hoped that the contract amendment could be signed and implemented in time for

the 1994 season. But by early 1994, negotiations were stalled. Talks took a new turn, however, when ARA representatives proposed operating a reservation system for both the shuttle bus and the park campgrounds. NPS representatives were amenable to this proposal, and on June 3, 1994, agency director Roger Kennedy signed the contract amendment.¹⁶⁴

When news of this contract was made public, various interest groups protested “almost every aspect of the contract,” according to one news item. The NPS, critics noted, rushed to close the deal before conducting necessary safety and environmental studies, and some were irked that the financial details were being kept confidential, leading some to believe that the NPS was being shortchanged. Another annoyed group was the Denali Task Force, an NPS Advisory Board group that Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt had selected, because the contract amendment was finalized without their knowledge or input.¹⁶⁵ NPS Regional Director Jack Morehead, in response to the criticism, agreed to prepare an environmental assessment (EA) on the proposed new concessioner facilities, and Morehead's successor, Bob Barbee, agreed to begin work on yet another management plan for the 90-mile-long road corridor. (This latter plan is detailed in Chapter 10.) On September 1, the Department authorized ARA to purchase sufficient buses to operate the system. Two months later, the NPS completed and distributed its concessioner facilities EA, and in the spring of 1995, Aramark (the concessioner's new name) began operating the new shuttle bus system.¹⁶⁶ The bus fleet was comprised of 25

blue-green “Blue Bird” 48-passenger buses for trips as far west as Eielson Visitor Center; for points farther west, however, yellow-colored 40-passenger buses were on hand. A shuttle-bus trip from the entrance area to Eielson cost \$20, while a Wonder Lake trip cost \$26.¹⁶⁷



Campers traveling to or from campgrounds without private vehicle access, including Sanctuary, Igloo, and Wonder Lake campgrounds, use designated camper shuttle buses for transportation. NPS Photo, Denali National Park and Preserve

A key provision worked out in the concessioner’s contract amendment dealt with the long-running issue of bus-system capacity. As noted above, NPS officials had reacted to the capacity limits laid out in the 1986 GMP by closing most of the park’s campgrounds to motorized camper traffic, cutting back on road use by concession and NPS staff, and by instituting a new “Natural History Tour” that terminated at Primrose Ridge. Those measures successfully kept road traffic under the GMP’s limits. Visitation between 1991 and 1994, moreover, had dropped more than 10 percent, resulting in an easing up of the capacity issue.¹⁶⁸ The concessioner was willing to entertain a major contract modification, with a concomitant investment in buses and support facilities. It was reluctant to take that step, however, without some guarantee that future visitors—whatever their number—would be able to access the park’s wonders via the existing park road. So when the contract amendment was announced on June 6, the press release stated that “the improvements to the system include a 40 percent increase in the number of shuttle bus seats,” which was far higher than the GMP allowed. Park superintendent Russell Berry, moreover, justified the new ridership numbers by stating that the road’s “stage three” capacity was 38 percent higher than in 1984: not 20 percent higher, as many had

previously concluded.¹⁶⁹ But the barrage of criticism that the NPS faced after the details of the contract amendment were released to the public, plus the Interior Department’s decision to embark on yet another park-road management plan, put on hold any immediate plans to abandon capacity limits that were more than 20 percent greater than in 1984. Traffic capacity, meanwhile, ceased being a critical public issue, primarily because visitor volumes remained generally stable for the next several years.

The Visitor Entrance Fee Issue

As noted in Chapter 8, typical park visitors prior to the 1970s paid no fees to the NPS for using the park. Fees were charged only for those taking the concession-sponsored bus tour out the park road, along with the usual charges for the park hotel, coffee shop, and other concession operations. About 1970 the NPS began to charge fees for those staying at the park campgrounds, but two years later, when private vehicle traffic was restricted west of the Savage River campground, no fees were assessed to those who traveled on the park’s shuttle bus system. This arrangement continued for the remainder of the decade.

The question of fees arose during the debate that led to ANILCA. In the spring of 1979, the NPS announced its intention to charge a \$5 fee for riding the shuttle bus. Alaskans, however, strongly protested the proposed fee, and after Senator Ted Stevens introduced legislation to prohibit the fee’s implementation, the agency withdrew its fee proposal. On October 1, 1979, the Senate considered a House bill on an unrelated matter, and Senator Stevens—sure that the bill would pass—inserted an amendment (Sec. 402) prohibiting the NPS from establishing user fees for bus service, and also barring the NPS from establishing an entrance fee at Mount McKinley National Park. That bill passed the Senate the same day and became law on October 12.¹⁷⁰ That fee prohibition was reiterated in Section 203 of ANILCA, which stated that “notwithstanding any other provision of law, no fees shall be charged for entrance or admission to any unit of the National Park System located in Alaska.”¹⁷¹

The costs of the bus operation, however, brought pressure on the agency to institute a fee. During the summer of 1982, for example, the NPS estimated that each of the 68,774 visitors who rode the free shuttle bus cost the government \$11.32. Perhaps based on pressure from Interior Secretary James Watt, who visited Alaska in August 1983, NPS Regional Director Roger Contor stated that the NPS wanted to see tourists pay \$5 for the bus ride. That proposal was staved off for the

time being, perhaps because of the efforts of Rep. Don Young.¹⁷²

Soon afterward, however, pressure began to develop in Congress to allow a shuttle bus fee by eliminating the operative clause from the Act of October 12, 1979. (ANILCA's Section 203 would remain unaffected, inasmuch as the proposed fee was a ridership fee and not an entrance fee.) By February 1985 the Interior Department—recognizing that \$1.35 million had been budgeted during the current fiscal year to keep the park's shuttle buses going—was proposing the implementation of a shuttle bus fee structure: one day for \$5, three days for \$10, and a season pass for \$20. These fees, it was projected, would generate approximately \$600,000 in annual revenue.¹⁷³ Congress did not take up the issue that year, but the economic pressures continued; in July 1986, for example, a Reagan administration bill proposed new entrance fees at many park units and an increase in entrance fees at other park units.¹⁷⁴

The issue finally came to a head in 1987. Superintendent Cunningham recalls that during the summer congressional recess, Rep. John Kasich (R-Ohio) visited the park, and the two conversed in the park hotel. Cunningham, who was worried that Congress was going to reduce the park's budget, was relieved to hear Kasich mention that the budget would not be cut. What Kasich may not have mentioned, however, was that a congressional plan was in the works to institute a bus fee proposal and that Congress's general-fund allotment to the park would be reduced to the degree that bus revenues would be generated. Shortly after that visit, Rep. William H. Gray (D-Pa.) introduced a massive budget bill (H.R. 3523). The bill passed the House on October 29. At some point between then and December 11 (when the Senate passed the bill), an amendment was added that authorized the Interior Secretary to charge an admission fee at Denali National Park. The bill was signed by President Reagan and became law on December 22, 1987.¹⁷⁵

Park staff, in observance of the new law, began collecting fees from everyone who continued west of the Savage River check station. Beginning in 1988 a \$3 fee was charged to all adults aged 17 or more; those on the shuttle buses paid when they boarded at the Riley Creek information center, while the concessioner collected the fee as part of the Tundra Wildlife Tour ticket price. By 1991, these entrance fees brought in \$500,000 to government coffers, and by 1993 "record amounts of fees were collected and remitted." In 1993, shuttle bus tickets still cost just \$3 per person.¹⁷⁶

Shoulder Season Traffic and the Lottery System

Visitation to Alaska's Railbelt has long been highly seasonal. In keeping with that pattern, rail-borne visitation to Mount McKinley has long been concentrated in an 11- or 12-week summer season. Automobile traffic along the park road, which eased park access to Railbelt residents beginning in the late 1950s, followed a similar pattern. A few brave residents came as early as April, and a few as late as October, but the vast majority of tourists (particularly those from outside of Alaska) arrived between late May and early September. As was noted in Chapter 8, NPS officials in 1972 announced that their new shuttle bus system would operate from June 1 until September 10, and in later years the bus season moved to a Memorial-Day-weekend-to-mid-September schedule.

For automobile tourists who arrived in the springtime, they could drive as far as the Toklat River (if open that far) until shuttle buses began their scheduled service. In a similar way, late-season tourists were free to use the park road until the snow rendered the road impassable. Inasmuch as NPS maintenance crews typically began their efforts in March or early April, springtime tourists—if they were lucky—could drive on the park road for a month or more prior to Memorial Day; and during the fall, tourists typically had between a month and six weeks to use the park road. To encourage local visitation to the park, Alaskan newspapers during the 1970s often published mid-May articles inviting locals to avoid the "summer hordes of tourists," and in mid-September there were travel pieces describing the "perfect weather" along the park road.¹⁷⁷ As a practical matter, however, few people spent much time driving the park road during either the spring or fall months. This was because the park hotel—the only major accommodation in the area—was not open during most of the shoulder season. The park campgrounds, moreover, were either snowbound or they were simply cold, damp, and uncomfortable.

This pattern—of an open road and an open invitation to visit—remained during the first half of the 1980s.¹⁷⁸ But by 1986, the specter of overcrowding had descended on the shoulder season's tranquility. That year, the agency opened the entire length of the road to general traffic on Monday, September 8.¹⁷⁹ Beginning that day, about 250 cars a day trundled over the road. (This number was far greater than the number of vehicles that typically traveled over the park road during mid-season; NPS officials noted that on a peak day in July, the number of buses, work vehicles, ranger patrols and private cars "might get as high as 150.")¹⁸⁰ Then, on Saturday, September 13, some 500 cars

During the 1980s, the park road stayed open for private traffic from Labor Day weekend (when the shuttle bus system ended for the season) until winter snows closed it. The increasing popularity of the park during the late 1980s resulted in bumper-to-bumper traffic congestion. NPS Interp. Collection, #4374, Denali National Park and Preserve



headed west from Savage River, creating bumper-to-bumper traffic, frayed nerves, and at least one fender-bender. Hoping to avoid a repeat of those difficulties, the NPS in 1987 waited until Monday, September 14 to open the road; as a result, officials happily noted that “we did not witness the usual influx ... with dust clouds, wildlife/people conflicts, etc.”¹⁸¹ The following year, officials limited the fall road opening to just three days, and in 1989 it was open for just two days: Saturday and Sunday, September 16 and 17. (In both of those years, the road remained open after the designated “open” period, but only as far west as the Toklat Rest Area at Mile 53; a week after that, the road was closed west of the Teklanika Rest Area at Mile 30.) Rangers, asked to explain the new restrictions, stated that they were attempting to shift road use more toward a “mass transit” system in order to increase wildlife habitat, and thus wildlife sightings.¹⁸²

The two-day road opening in September 1989, as it turned out, was exceedingly popular; on Saturday the 16th, almost 1,500 vehicles headed down the park road. Based on that severe overcrowding, park officials moved to eliminate the September overcrowding by instituting a lottery system. That plan, which was announced in May 1990 and open for public comment until June 8, resulted in a light and variable response; of 34 responses, slightly over half were in favor of the plan. Russell Berry, the park’s new superintendent, felt that the lottery was a good, fair system, so in mid-June the NPS announced its implementation, at least for the fall of 1990. In late July, anyone interested in driving the park road during a four-day period—Friday, September 14 through

Monday, September 17—was asked to send the NPS a postcard expressing their interest. On August 10, Superintendent Berry sent letters to the winning entrants. Eighty percent of the 1,500 entrants were awarded the opportunity to drive the road: 300 people on each of the four days. The fall road opening took place as scheduled, during which time all cars without successful lottery entries were stopped at the Savage check station. In the spring of 1990, this station had been moved two miles west—from just beyond the Savage River campground to the far side of the Savage River bridge—as part of a road paving project. It has remained at its new site ever since.¹⁸³

The opening was so successful, both to participants and the park’s wildlife, that the agency decided to continue the lottery in future years. Beginning in 1991, those interested in driving the road were given the entire month of July to send entries to the park showing their dates of interest, and during early August the agency selected and notified the winning entries. The only major change that took place during the next several years was that the number of awarded permits (1,200) stayed constant, while the number of interested applicants steadily increased. The only other variable was the weather. NPS officials reserved the right to close the road at any time due to early-season snow, and in 1992, a major snowstorm hit just before the first day of the September road opening. As a result, the road was closed to all vehicles midway through the second road-opening day, and 58 people who had driven all the way to Kantishna were stranded for several days until crews could clear the park road and allow motorists to get back to the Parks Highway.¹⁸⁴

The Savage check station, shown here, was located just west of the entrance to Savage River Campground. In 1990 it was moved to the west side of the Savage River bridge. Brad Ebel Collection



Between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s, when such major changes were taking place regarding the fall road opening, the policy regarding spring road opening remained much the same. Throughout this period, NPS maintenance crews began clearing the park road in early April and, as they worked their way west, park staff opened the road to regular passenger car traffic. They never, however, opened the road west of Teklanika Rest Stop until the Memorial Day weekend, when the shuttle buses began running and the regular summer traffic restrictions were put into effect. During the general management planning process of the mid-1980s, NPS officials briefly toyed with the idea of starting up the shuttle bus system “as soon as the road opens.” The final GMP, however, reverted to the former pattern, with a Memorial Day weekend opening for the shuttle bus system.¹⁸⁵

During these years, there was increasing pressure to open the road each spring in time to provide access to park visitors, Kantishna-area businesses, and other Kantishna-area landowners. NPS maintenance crews, however, still faced the daunting annual snow-removal task. As noted in previous chapters, staff had tried several innovative methods (including ice fences and the use of Primacord) to minimize aufeis at three major trouble spots along the park road. By the late 1970s, however, crews had abandoned those methods; instead, they relied on a grader to keep the road-surface open, and steam and oil heaters to keep the culverts free of ice.

During the early 1980s, park maintenance crews attempted to speed up the spring road-opening process as best as they could. The 1983 purchase

Beginning on September 11, 1992, the park experienced a major storm with heavy snowfall and high winds, making the park road impassable. Road crews began plowing a single lane, encountering 12' deep drifts, opening the road enough to convoy vehicles & people from Kantishna out of the park on the evening of September 18. This photo shows Eielson Visitor Center with an approaching plow. Brad Ebel Collection



This “ripper” attachment on the park’s D-7 Caterpillar was used in the spring to break up the aufeis, or overflow, which had accumulated over the winter at locations along the park road. Roads, NPS Photo, Denali National Park and Preserve



of a “ripper” attachment for the park’s D-7 Caterpillar successfully removed the accumulated aufeis layers at several problem areas along the park road. (Problem areas were located at approximately fifteen places along the park road, especially at Mile 4, Mile 5, and Mile 7.) That method, however, severely damaged the pavement surface layer, so park staff sought out a new ice-removal method. Two years later, crews constructed an insulated underdrain system in the Mile 4 area, but it proved ineffective in dealing with the perennial aufeis buildup. Between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s, road crews worked to prevent aufeis accumulation by periodically going over the problem areas on a grader

Road crew and equipment clear snow from Polychrome Pass during the spring road opening, 1991. Brad Ebel Collection

with a ripper attachment; that method minimized the need to employ a bulldozer, with a ripper attachment, during the spring road opening. But two new complications arose that prevented the long-term implementation of that two-pronged strategy. The first, in the late 1980s, took place because dog mushers and skiers showed an increasing interest in using the park road as an access route. In response to their concerns, road crews agreed to limit their pre-spring clearing operations to a single lane of the park road. Then, beginning in 1992, road crews were asked to stop their midwinter grading activities in the various aufeis problem areas; as a result, ice again emerged as a major, if occasional, problem for the spring road opening crews. Between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s, spring road opening operations typically began in late March or early April, and the road was normally open to bus traffic, both to Eielson Visitor Center and to Wonder Lake, between June 3 and June 10.¹⁸⁶

The Park Road Ownership Issue

A nagging question that arose during the 1980s and early 1990s was basic to the NPS’s ability to manage the park and its visitors: namely, who owned the park road? As noted in Chapters 3 through 5, the construction of the park road was



Spring road opening includes removal of snow and ice by the park road crew and the work of sunny weather to dry out the road. Brad Ebel Collection



the direct result of an April 1922 agreement between NPS Director Stephen Mather and Alaska Road Commission President James Steese. As a result of that agreement, the ARC laid out a right-of-way between McKinley Park Station and the townsite of Kantishna in the summer of 1922, and Commission employees—using primarily NPS funds—built the road, a few miles at a time, between 1923 and 1938. For more than forty years after the road’s completion, there had been little dispute regarding who owned it. But shortly after ANILCA’s passage, State of Alaska officials reinterpreted the road’s legal status. Noting that the NPS had recently “raised questions regarding the authority of the state to police the roads within Mt. McKinley [sic] National Park,” Assistant Attorney General William F. Cummings stated that “there seems to be little question that the state has the authority to exercise control over highways within the park.” The state used, as its primary argument, language in Section 21(a) of the Alaska Omnibus Act (which Congress passed in 1959) and a series of quit-claim deeds that followed as a result of that bill. One of these quit-claim deeds called for the Secretary of Commerce (of which the Bureau of Public Roads was an agency) to transfer the entire Denali Highway to the State of Alaska, including all of the highway mileage located within the “old park” boundaries.¹⁸⁷

NPS officials, when apprised of Cummings’ memo, asked the Interior Department Solicitor’s office to weigh in on the matter. In February 1983, U.S. attorney Robert C. Babson responded and concluded that the reasoning contained in

the state’s opinion was “singularly unpersuasive.” Noting that Section 11(a) of the Alaska Statehood Act had conferred exclusive jurisdiction¹⁸⁸ on the “old park” and any future additions to it, he stated that “the complete inapplicability of State jurisdiction in areas wherein the Federal Government has acquired either exclusive or partial legislative jurisdiction is a well settled principle of constitutional law.” He also contradicted the state’s memo by stating that the Alaska Omnibus Act and the resulting quit-claim deed applied only for those roads over which the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) had legal jurisdiction. The Denali Highway, however, had always been under NPS ownership and control; the BPR’s role at the park was limited to routine maintenance. Thus the Secretary of Commerce—despite the inadvertent language in the 1959 quit-claim deed—did not have the power to divest road mileage located within the park. A follow-up opinion by Interior Solicitor Don Bauer arrived at much the same conclusion as Babson; he further noted that in 1959, the state apparently “acquired nothing more than a limited right to use the road for road purposes, in accordance with NPS regulations and management prerogatives.”¹⁸⁹

For the remainder of the decade, the issue of road ownership lay quiet, and state officials continued to recognize federal hegemony over the road. When the issue erupted again, it came from an unexpected source: a Kantishna-area landowner. Throughout the 1980s, an ANILCA provision guaranteed inholders “adequate and feasible access for economic and other purposes...”¹⁹⁰ Given that provision, NPS and Kantishna-area



Once the park road is plowed in the spring and before it opens to regular traffic, outdoor enthusiasts find excellent biking and skiing. Brad Ebel Collection

businesses had maintained an informal access agreement; the lodges provided vans to transport guests back and forth, but motorized access by individual lodge guests and employees was discouraged.

In the spring of 1990, however, Dan Ashbrook, who owned 180 acres of patented land near the Moose Creek-Eldorado Creek confluence, announced his intention to open a 260-space recreational vehicle (RV) park on his land that summer. Breaking up the longstanding informal agreement, he contacted NPS officials and demanded that his customers be allowed access along the park road. Park officials recognized that putting hundreds of RVs and other vehicles on the park road might have major impacts on visitor safety and park wildlife, and they also predicted a sharp reduction in bus traffic. Given existing laws and regulations, the agency reluctantly acceded to Ashbrook's request. Beginning on June 12, anyone was free to drive the park road so long as they had some sort of business in

Kantishna or had been invited by a Kantishna-area landowner.¹⁹¹

Denali Superintendent Russell Berry responded to the agency's decision by holding public meetings at Denali Park, Fairbanks, and Anchorage on June 13, 14, and 15, respectively. Large crowds attended these meetings, most of them angry at the recent turn of events.¹⁹² The NPS's decision to publicize the new access rules rankled Ashbrook and his fiancée, Valerie Mundt, who felt that their business transaction should have been kept private. But the agency's action did not stop them from developing their property, which they called the Mount McKinley Gold Camp.¹⁹³

Publicity about the new Kantishna campground, both in Alaska and elsewhere, resulted in a huge level of interest, both from those hoping to camp there and in those who looked forward to a mid-season auto trip along the park road. But private vehicle traffic along the park road turned out to be far sparser than had been expected. Some

travelers, to be sure, were turned back at the Savage River check station because they had no verifiable business in Kantishna. But many others opted not to go because of media reports that the “campground” consisted of five unfinished tent frames placed on an uneven swath of mine tailings; the camp had no sign, no water or restroom facilities, no onsite staff, and no access without fording Moose Creek.¹⁹⁴ Traffic to the RV park, as it turned out, was sufficiently slight that the NPS never felt the need to reduce the number of daily tour or shuttle buses.¹⁹⁵ After the 1990 season, the RV park operation (which was managed by Ms. Mundt) struggled on, and for the next several years the campground’s clientele continued to drive out the park road. Her operation closed down after the 1996 season.¹⁹⁶

In the fall of 1990, development advocate Walter Hickel and Kantishna road advocate Jack Coghill were elected Alaska’s governor and lieutenant governor, respectively, on the Alaskan Independence Party (AIP) ticket. Both Hickel and Coghill felt that the state—not the federal government—should own the park road and thus have the right to manage its access. Neither man overtly protested the NPS’s ownership or management of the road. In March 1993, however, a radical AIP faction calling itself the Alaska Reclamation Committee announced its intention to drive their private vehicles over the park road during the July 4th weekend. A member of this group, having spoken to Kantishna-area miners about park access, claimed that the federal government had given the park road to the state in 1959. To stake that claim, the group planned to drive ten or twenty carloads of people to the Savage River check station and blockade the road. Superintendent Berry responded to the impending threat by meeting with the group’s leaders in Fairbanks on July 1st. At that meeting, Berry (according to one of the ARC’s organizers) stated that “he would not cite us and would not try to stop us.” Berry did, however, state that he would be mailing citations to each driver.¹⁹⁷ Given those ground rules, about 30 protesters arrived at the park on Saturday evening, July 3, stayed overnight at Kantishna, panned for gold in Moose Creek, and returned the following day.¹⁹⁸

At the Savage River check station on July 3, NPS rangers—as expected—jotted down the license plates of several vehicles and mailed citations to their owners. Not surprisingly, two of these owners, Dexter Clark and Kenneth Leake, appealed their citations to the Federal district court in a suit that was supported by the Hickel administration. The following April, Judge James Singleton ruled that the park road belonged to the federal government; as a result, Clark and

Leake were found guilty of trespassing and given a \$1 suspended fine.¹⁹⁹

The state, however, was not letting the matter drop. Beginning in the summer of 1993, Commissioner Bruce Campbell and other state Department of Transportation and Public Facilities officials compiled an extensive historical summary of jurisdiction and ownership issues pertaining to the McKinley Park Road. And after the April 1994 court decision, it was still pursuing a court case to have a judge look at more evidence. U.S. Senator Frank Murkowski, siding with the state and hoping to build an R.S. 2477-related case, put out a call to present and former Alaskans to search family albums for maps, photos, letters, or diaries for any evidence of a trail used before 1917 that roughly followed the present road right-of-way. The state attorney general’s office repeatedly stated that it planned to appeal the judge’s decision. None of the evidence gathered, however, was sufficient to justify a lawsuit, and since that time, no further threats have arisen to the federal government’s hegemony over the park road.²⁰⁰

New Kantishna Route Proposals

During the 1980s, the State of Alaska not only questioned the federal government’s ownership of the park road; it also pressed the National Park Service for one or more new access routes to Kantishna. State officials, hoping to develop the state’s resources, had never been particularly comfortable with the agency’s 1972 decision to limit traffic on the park road west of the Savage River Campground, and before long, the state’s frustration resulted in efforts to construct a northern route from the Parks Highway to Kantishna.

Years earlier, there had been a number of ways to reach the Kantishna area. As noted in Chapter 3, several trails and wagon roads had spanned the distance between the Alaska Railroad and Kantishna during the early 1920s; one of these was a so-called “lower route” which headed west from Lignite to the Toklat River, then southwest via Clearwater Fork and Moose Creek to the gold camp. Prospectors had also been able to access the community by ascending various waterways to Roosevelt, Diamond, or Glacier City, all of which were short-lived settlements located not far north of Kantishna. Prospectors continued to use these routes until the late 1930s, when the park road (using the “upper route”) was extended to the Kantishna town site. The federal government’s decision to construct the park road, following the Alaska Road Commission’s long-term policy, meant that the ARC ceased maintaining other area routes. That action, plus

This former Fairbanks school bus, now more than 20 miles west of the Parks Highway near Healy, was used by a Stampede Trail construction crew in 1961, then abandoned. In 1992, 24-year-old Chris McCandless lived (and died) in this bus. His life, and the four-month ordeal prior to his death, became the subject of a 1997 Jon Krakauer book (*Into the Wild*) and a 2007 Sean Penn movie of the same name. NPS Photo



a diminished level of Kantishna-area mining activity, brought about the abandonment of other nearby trails and wagon roads.²⁰¹

Between the late 1930s and the early 1970s, various people tried to build an additional access road in the area; the primary party was Earl Pilgrim, owner and operator of the Stampede Mine. As is described more fully in Chapter 14, Pilgrim purchased the mine in 1936, and that fall he hewed out an informal “tractor road” to the Lignite railroad stop and hauled out several loads of stibnite (antimony ore). This route was the Stampede winter trail, which was along a right-of-way that was similar to the so-called “lower route” that ARC personnel had surveyed during the early 1920s.²⁰² That route, however, was uneconomical, and during the war years Pilgrim bladed out an airstrip. In addition, he worked with NPS officials to rough out a route from his mine south along the Toklat River to the park road. But impediments—initially financial, later policy-related—prevented the route’s construction.

By 1960, Pilgrim was working on new road plans with officials for the new State of Alaska’s pioneer road program. That November, Yutan Construction Co. of Fairbanks submitted a winning (and low) bid of \$250,000 to build a road between Lignite and Stampede. Yutan personnel began work in the spring of 1961, and in order to sup-

port the field crew, the company hauled a retired Fairbanks school bus out to a site just east of the Sushana River. Two seasons were allotted for the work, but by October 1961, state Department of Public Works personnel declared that the terms of the contract had been satisfied.²⁰³ Pilgrim, prior to construction, had made it known that any viable route between Stampede and the railroad needed to follow the relatively well-drained terraces. But the contractor instead decided to follow much of the same wet, boggy ground that Alaska Road Commission personnel had rejected back in the 1920s. A Yutan employee, with some difficulty, was able to drive a four-wheel-drive vehicle all the way west to the Stampede airstrip and back; that “road,” however, was never used again by a wheeled vehicle.²⁰⁴

Soon after the NPS limited traffic over the park road in 1972, some Alaskans began to advocate the construction of a new road to Kantishna. State transportation planners, during this period, tried to legitimize several different routes connecting the Anchorage-Fairbanks Highway with Kantishna. But by late 1974, when the Alaska Planning Group published its *Final Environmental Statement* on the proposed park additions, the state proposed only one new route in the area. That route avoided the old Stampede route; instead, it left the new highway at Rex (28 miles north of Lignite and 41 miles north of McKinley Park Station), headed west to the Toklat River,

then angled southwest to Kantishna before heading almost due west to Telida.²⁰⁵

Shortly after Congress passed ANILCA, state Senator Frank Ferguson (D-Kotzebue) and Rep. Joe Hayes (R-Anchorage) showed their displeasure with the newly-enlarged park by filing resolutions “requesting the NPS to improve an old mining road through the northern additions to Denali [i.e., the old Stampede Mine road] and extend the route to the Denali Park Road at Wonder Lake.” Supporters, hoping to see a one-way loop road constructed through the park and showing its concern about the park road’s safety in the wake of the 1981 bus accident, noted that the road would benefit park visitors and improve safety. On February 24, 1982, the Senate began moving Ferguson’s resolution, and on March 3, the Senate passed it with a unanimous vote. The resolution then moved over to the House. On May 27, the House defeated it, 17-13; a day later, however, the vote was reconsidered and it passed, 24-11. Governor Hammond signed it on June 2.²⁰⁶ Nothing came of it, however.

During the mid-1980s, scattered voices in the Fairbanks area continued to push for an alternate route to Kantishna. The NPS, however, showed no enthusiasm for it. As noted in the park’s draft GMP,

The potential for upgrading the Stampede Trail to provide access into the far northern area of the park was eliminated from further consideration because of the estimated cost of construction and the potential for environmental damage. The *Final Environmental Impact Statement, Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study* (USDI 1984) estimated the cost of this road to be \$100 million to \$150 million. There is currently no economic justification for building this road. This trail crosses the denning areas of the Toklat and Savage wolf packs, the winter range of the Denali caribou herd, the major movement corridor along the Toklat River for both wolves and caribou, and many miles of pristine country that currently are suitable for wilderness designation.

In response to this statement, the State of Alaska responded with its own statement, portions of which were incorporated into the agency’s final GMP. The NPS’s overall stance regarding alternate road access, however, remained largely unchanged.²⁰⁷

During the late 1980s, Senator John B. “Jack” Coghill (R-Nenana) revived momentum in the northern-access idea. In 1988, he and Senator Ken Fanning (R-Fairbanks) lent vocal support to the idea, and a year later, Coghill introduced Senate bills SB 185 and SB 186 to authorize and fund the construction of a “Kantishna Highway” between Lignite, Stampede, and Kantishna. The proposed \$72 million highway would be funded almost entirely from federal sources. Neither bill got past the committee stage. Another idea that came forth during this period was that Kantishna might be accessed by railroad. Bob Thomas, a Fairbanks transportation engineer, spearheaded the idea and noted that a railroad offered the possibility of access but without the dangers to wildlife that a road would entail.²⁰⁸

During the mid-to-late 1980s, another issue welled to the surface that offered the potential to open up not only a new northern access route but other access routes besides. By using an old federal law, called Revised Statute 2477, state officials hoped to regain control over hundreds of federally-managed routes throughout Alaska, and in 1990 they announced that they intended to use the provisions in this statute to open up a northern access route to Kantishna.

The controversy over this issue had been brewing for a long time. In July 1866, Congress had passed a bill that dealt with lode mining, among other provisions. To allow access to mines on public lands, Section 8 of the bill contained the following access provision: “And be it further enacted, That the right-of-way for the construction of highways over public lands, not reserved for public uses, is hereby granted.” Seven years later, Congress reorganized the federal laws, and the above statement became a right-of-way ordinance known as Section 2477 of the *Revised Statutes of the United States*.²⁰⁹ In 1976, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act repealed R.S. 2477; Congress, however, inserted a clause protecting “existing rights,” including any rights-of-way that may have been established before 1976. The State of Alaska, recognizing the importance of this clause, embarked on an extensive effort to identify as many routes as possible that had known, established historical uses, and by the mid-1980s they had identified 28 potential R.S. 2477 rights-of-way within Denali National Park and Preserve. (A description of these rights-of-way was included in the park’s final GMP.) In 1988, Interior Secretary Donald Hodel established a broad definition of what qualified as a pre-existing right-of-way; and if that right-of-way was later incorporated into a conservation unit such as a national park, pre-existing rights still predominated. This action emboldened

officials in western states who hoped to gain control over road access, and in 1990 State of Alaska officials announced that they intended to open the 92-mile-long “Kantishna Trail” as a test case for public access across federal park lands. This route, which was one of the 28 that state land planners had previously selected, went from Rex to the Toklat River and on to Kantishna; it was similar, though not identical, to the route in the “Kantishna Highway” proposal that Senator Coghill and others had been advocating in the Alaska legislature.²¹⁰

The northern access issue heated up considerably during the early 1990s. In November 1990, Walter Hickel, running on the Alaska Independence Party ticket, was elected Alaska’s governor along with his running mate, Senator Coghill. Hickel, shortly after his election, made no secret (according to one newspaper article) that he was “Alaska’s biggest dreamer,” and Coghill, the newly-elected lieutenant governor, was one of the most visible and outspoken critics of NPS road access policy. The new governor believed in development through the construction of major projects, and by the summer of 1991 he had focused on the construction of six major road segments, one of which was the Stampede Trail Road from Healy to Kantishna.²¹¹ Hickel, U.S. Senator Frank Murkowski, and various private developers recognized that the Kantishna area had some 6,000 acres in private hands (most of which were on unpatented mining claims), and given proper access, they hoped to see the construction of one or more large-scale hotels in the area. The state, during this period, felt that constructing a new Kantishna access road would cost between \$85 million and \$125 million.²¹²

During this same period, private interests—continuing the notions first set forth by Bob Thomas in the late 1980s—advanced new proposals for railroad access into the heart of the park. During the early 1990s, the idea took shape among several Fairbanks residents that a railroad, using private financing, should be built between Healy and Wonder Lake. That group, led by former contractor Joe Fields, became the nucleus for Kantishna Holdings, Inc. For the next several years the group worked largely out of the public eye. Several state senators and legislators, however, were sufficiently aware of their activities that they gave deference to the group’s proposals in upcoming legislation.²¹³

To shed further light on the access issue, the NPS organized its own study. This effort got started soon after the Ashbrook-RV park controversy (see previous section) made headlines; more specifically, it followed a meeting between Sen.

Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska) and NPS Director James Ridenour. The ad hoc, seven-member group included John Morehead from the Washington office, Bob Barbee from Yellowstone, Paul Haertel from the regional office, and park superintendent Russ Berry.²¹⁴ The group began its work with several high-level meetings in Alaska in mid-February 1991. It reconvened in July with a visit along the Denali park road, and in November it issued its report. The *Denali Access Task Force Report* recommended that park congestion could be eased with a passenger railroad or even a monorail system, and it suggested that both modes be studied further. But the report dashed cold water on alternate road access. “A second road would dramatically change the character of the park,” the report noted. Such a road “puts at risk the up-close viewing of animals that draw people to Denali. It adds nothing to a visitor’s ability to see the mountain. And it changes the visitor’s perception that he is riding to a special place, a place set apart from the urban world of pavement and high-speed transportation.” The report candidly admitted that the cost of building a railroad or monorail “is higher than for a road, and could prove an impossible obstacle.” But it also noted that “the system could prove a valuable demonstration project for other federal parks...”.²¹⁵ New access modes, in fact, were already being proposed for further study; in late 1991, via ISTEA (see below), Congress authorized funds for the study of alternative transportation systems in several national parks.²¹⁶

Little activity took place regarding alternate park access for more than a year, but in the summer of 1993, the Hickel administration unveiled a new set of highway projects for which it was advocating. Gone was the Stampede Trail Road, which it had highlighted in 1991; in its place, however, was a new 200-mile highway that spanned the distance between Nenana (on the Parks Highway) and the Kuskokwim River village of McGrath. State officials also planned a “possible spur to Kantishna if the state can get past the objections of the National Park Service.” The NPS had no problem with the construction of the McGrath road, even if it (in the words of agency spokesman John Quinley) “nipped Denali National Park by a mile or so.” The state applied for, and received, a \$1.2 million federal grant to study the proposed road, and various park staff assisted the state in that study. During the study period, McGrath residents came forth and stated that they were far more interested in a road to the Yukon River (which would require about 75 miles of new road construction) than the 200-mile route to Nenana. Residents of other points along the proposed road, such as Nikolai and Lake Minchumina, likewise came out against the proposed

Nenana-McGrath road. And a state transportation official, queried on the subject, readily admitted that the primary project goal was access to Kantishna, not the Kuskokwim; having been thwarted in an earlier attempt to study a highway to Kantishna, he simply incorporated those ideas into the larger McGrath project.²¹⁷

During this period, the Alaska legislature—recognizing that Denali was federal land and that any funds expended on transportation improvements would be largely funded by federal sources—did what it could to push Kantishna-related development. In February 1992, Shirley Craft (D-Fairbanks) and other Railbelt senators had introduced a resolution urging “the Governor and the executive branch to be aggressive in their resolve to ... develop ... new environmentally sound access routes into Kantishna and a Kantishna activity area.” And then—perhaps having Kantishna Holdings’ railroad plans in mind—state senators also asked state agencies to work with others “to thoroughly investigate the potential for the private sector to construct and operate a transportation system, such as an electric railroad, and other facilities that would serve the public needs.” That resolution (SJR 44) passed the Senate March 23, on a 16-1 vote, but got bogged down in the House.²¹⁸ A year later, Tom Brice (D-Fairbanks) and other House members introduced a similar resolution. The main focus, as before, was “supporting increased access near Mt. McKinley through establishment of a visitor activity area at Kantishna.” But given Interior Secretary Babbitt’s stated interest for a railroad into the area, the new resolution (HJR 28) asked state and federal authorities to “thoroughly investigate the potential of establishing a rail utility corridor into Kantishna in which the private sector could construct and operate a transportation system and other facilities that would serve the public needs.” That resolution handily passed the House (in March 1993), but for the time being it made little headway in the Senate.²¹⁹

The legislature’s effort to encourage a new Kantishna access route dovetailed with plans being suggested by a top federal official. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, during a mid-August 1993 auto trip down the park road with Governor Hickel, noted that “I think rail is the future for the national parks,” and Babbitt stated during their day-long conversation that he was willing to consider either a light rail system, a narrow-gauge line, or a cog railway to bridge the distance between Kantishna and the Parks Highway. These statements were consistent with the recommendations of the 1992 Denali Access Study. Inasmuch as Hickel wanted transportation improvements in any form—a railroad, a new road, or an

upgrade to the existing road—Babbitt’s statements sounded an optimistic note with Hickel and other development advocates.²²⁰ Perhaps based on what Babbitt said, the resolution that had withered in the 1993 Alaska legislature gained new life when the following year’s session began; the resolution passed the Senate in January 1994, and Governor Hickel signed it on February 8.²²¹

During 1992 and 1993, in the midst of the State of Alaska’s efforts to provide for new access into the park, the NPS was hard at work on its own study that was intended to evaluate the economic and environmental impacts of various proposed access modes. When Congress, in late 1991, passed the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (commonly known as ISTEA), it included a provision (Section 1050) requesting “that a study be conducted of alternatives for visitor transportation in the national park system.”²²² The NPS responded by choosing two parks for study: Yellowstone and Denali.

The Denali study, formally known as the Alternative Transportation Modes Feasibility Study, was completed in May 1994; it was a logical follow-up to the agency’s Denali Access Study, issued in early 1992. The study made no policy recommendations; it did, however, provide financial estimates for construction, plus annual operation and maintenance, for various alternative transportation scenarios. The least expensive alternative, not surprisingly, was a replacement of the existing shuttle bus fleet with 52-passenger buses (\$21.4 million). Slightly more costly was the purchase of a fleet of larger 72-passenger buses (\$36.7 million). The least expensive new transportation mode was a 6-mile aerial tram connecting the Chulitna River crossing area with Alder Point (\$87.2 million). More expensive alternatives included a new road connecting Healy with Kantishna along the Stampede Road right-of-way (\$173 million), a railroad along the same route (\$218 million), a cog rail between the Denali Park Hotel and Eielson Visitor Center (\$314.5 million), and a cog rail between the hotel and Wonder Lake (\$413.5 million).²²³

By the time this study was released, a more high-profile group—the Denali Task Force, a hand-picked group that operated under the aegis of the NPS Advisory Board—had begun to deliberate a variety of park-related issues. The Task Force’s report, issued in October 1994, contained a number of recommendations about park access and transportation, but none suggested new route construction. Specifically, the report did not recommend a new northern route to Kantishna, a railroad along the Stampede Route, a cog rail paralleling the park road, or an aerial tramway

south of the Alaska Range. The report even took a dim view of the idea that the existing shuttle bus fleet be replaced by larger-sized buses. Its only recommendation for improvement—modest indeed, under the circumstances—was that the agency “improve the shuttle bus system by using buses designed for the park road with safety, comfort, and viewing in mind.”²²⁴

Infrastructure and Staff Growth

As noted above and in previous chapters, the park—despite many years of high visitation and repeated proposals to remedy the situation—had never had its own entrance-area visitor center, either during the 1980s or in any prior decade. Beginning in 1939, the new park hotel became the ad hoc visitor congregation point, and until the late 1950s the small number of visitors—and their ways of being transported to and through the park—reaffirmed the importance of the hotel’s centrality as it pertained to visitor activity. But in August 1957, the completion of the Denali Highway to the park brought thousands of motorists to the park, many of whom paid scant attention to the hotel. To cater to the new and growing legions, the NPS in 1959 built a small entrance station on the park road just east of the Alaska Railroad crossing. Thirteen years later, the NPS erected a larger but still inadequate Visitor Information Center (using a double-wide trailer) at the entrance to Riley Creek Campground. As noted in Chapter II, various proposals had been put forth to establish a park visitor center, some as early as the Mission 66 days of the mid-1950s, but none had ever come to fruition.



Russell W. Berry, Jr. served as park superintendent from June 1989 to October 1994. NPS Photo

Throughout this period, the primary park interpretive location remained the McKinley Park Hotel; ranger-led lectures and slide shows were offered here, and for many years the agency also staffed an interpretive desk. But beginning in the 1960s, the increasing popularity of the hotel—and the ever-larger space requirements that accompanied that popularity—made it more difficult to conduct interpretive programs there. Despite those pressures, the agency continued to offer interpretive services at the hotel through the summer of 1972, and it continued its presence at the new (1973) hotel for the remainder of the decade. But in the spring of 1979, the NPS installed a 40’ x 60’ “circus tent” just behind the hotel.²²⁵ This facility soon suffered structural problems, and it worked only marginally as an interpretive site. As part of the arrangement that resulted in the 1981 concessions agreement, the park concessioner agreed to build a new “audio visual room” adjacent to the hotel. This structure, later called an auditorium, was completed by the late summer of 1982 and opened to the public in June 1983.

In the early 1980s, the NPS signaled its interest in de-emphasizing the hotel’s interpretive role by moving to establish its own visitor center. In March 1982, the agency (as noted above) released a draft Development Concept Plan (DCP) for the park road corridor, and a key aspect of that plan was the construction of a new interpretive and transportation center to replace the existing double-wide trailer at the Riley Creek Campground entrance. That recommendation remained in the final DCP issued in January 1983. Later that year, NPS planners began working on a park general management plan. Perhaps because park road facilities had been studied so exhaustively for the just-completed DCP, the agency’s draft GMP, released in March 1985, continued to recommend what was now called a “visitor access center” in the Riley Creek entrance area. The final (November 1986) GMP reiterated that recommendation and further suggested the addition of an adjacent shuttle bus staging area.²²⁶

Funding the new center, however, proved problematic. By the end of 1983, NPS officials noted that they gained “tentative approval to have the structure built in 1986,” and the March 1985 draft GMP optimistically noted that “construction of a new \$3.7 million visitor access center is underway and will be completed in the spring of 1987.” But the final (November 1986) GMP, reflecting the loss of funding, suggested that the VAC was still in the proposal stage.²²⁷ It was not until early 1987 that the agency was able to award a construction contract; that September, the winning contractor—Ahtna Native Regional Corporation—began site preparation. By the end of 1988, the “basic shell” of the new building had been erected, and by late 1989 the building was complete, along with an adjacent 271-space parking lot. The new Visitor Access Center opened during Memorial Day weekend 1990; as the superintendent noted, the facility was “a vast improvement” over the 18-year-old double-wide trailer that it replaced.²²⁸ Since then, the VAC (today known as the Wilderness Access Center) has served as the primary way in which motorized visitors are introduced to the park and its various transportation, camping, and backcountry options. In addition, the various audio-visual programs in its auditorium have played a key interpretive role for many incoming visitors.

Between the passage of ANILCA and the mid-1990s, the park’s budget more than doubled, from \$2.6 million in 1980 to more than \$6.9 million in 1995. This budget growth is perhaps not surprising for a park unit that had just tripled in size and in which recreational visitation had almost tripled (from 216,000 in 1980 to 543,000 in 1995). (See Appendix A.) The number of staff



The new Visitor Access Center, opened in 1990, provided a much larger space for visitor services including a theater for interpretive programs and areas for issuing shuttle bus tickets, campground permits, and backcountry permits. Tom Habecker Collection

during this period also grew to some extent; the number of “full-time equivalents” grew from 21 to 55.²²⁹ The amount of park housing available for employees, however, rose not at all. People who were selected to work at the park were usually informed that government housing was not available, and given the severe climate and the relative lack of development in areas surrounding the park, several new hires reluctantly decided to not accept the positions that had been offered to them. Those who stayed, however, soon became settled in areas scattered from Deneki Lakes and McKinley Village north to Otto Lake and Healy, and several neighborhoods located most closely to the park boundary were populated primarily by current or former NPS employees.²³⁰ Within the park, the growth in seasonal employment at the park resulted in an increased number of employees living at the Toklat Road Camp, “C Camp,” and adjacent to the Wonder Lake Ranger Station.²³¹

The park, during this period, enjoyed a remarkably stable management regime. As noted earlier in this chapter, Alaska Area Director John Cook hired Robert C. “Clay” Cunningham, a biologist from Gateway National Recreation Area. (See Appendix B.) Cunningham, as did his immediate predecessors, worked during a time of major

conflict and change; he nevertheless retained his position for more than 8½ years. Cunningham stepped down in March 1989 and moved on to become the General Superintendent of the Southern Arizona Group, a cluster of NPS units headquartered in Phoenix. For the next six months, the park was managed by Thomas W. Griffiths, who had been the park’s chief ranger since 1981. That September, Regional Director Boyd Evison appointed as the next park superintendent Russell W. Berry, Jr., who at the time was serving as the superintendent at Voyageurs National Park in northeastern Minnesota. Berry, a native of Portsmouth, Virginia, remained on the job until late October 1994, when he became the superintendent of Cape Hatteras National Seashore in eastern North Carolina. Upon Berry’s departure, Regional Director Robert Barbee asked Steve Martin—at that time the superintendent at Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve—to take over the Denali job in an acting capacity. Martin remained acting superintendent until the following March, at which time the “acting” designation was removed.²³²

During most of the 1980s and on into the 1990s, the leadership responsibilities at Denali were to some extent a shared task. Ralph Tingey, a ranger at Grand Teton National Park, became Denali’s



The west side of the new Visitor Access Center provides for boarding of shuttle buses. NPS Interp. Collection, #5004, Denali National Park and Preserve

management assistant beginning in May 1981, and for the next eight years he and Cunningham worked together on a wide range of management issues. That teamwork remained until August 1990, when Tingey moved to Kotzebue and became the Northwest Alaska Areas superintendent. Another decision maker appeared in 1989, when Assistant Superintendent Linda Toms came on board. Toms, later known as Linda Buswell, continued to serve in that capacity until the late 1990s.²³³

removing the hotel, while the Alaska Congressional delegation advocated either retaining the existing hotel or constructing a replacement. (The development-minded *Anchorage Times*, during this period, published a series of poignant cartoons emphasizing the rustic, inadequate hotel accommodations.²³⁴) The park concessioner, by the early 1980s, strongly favored retaining the existing park hotel—in September 1981, as noted above, it signed a new concessions contract calling for numerous improvements in the immediate hotel vicinity—but inasmuch as the concessioner also operated the newly-constructed McKinley Chalets just outside the park boundary, it did not have a vested interest in expanding the present hotel or replacing it with a larger facility.



Ralph Tingey served as Denali's management assistant from 1981 to August 1990. He retired from the National Park Service as the Associate Regional Director for Resources and Operations in June 2006. NPS Photo

The Fate of the Park Hotel

A major question that hung over the heads of park managers throughout the 1980s and on into the 1990s was what to do about the park hotel. As noted in Chapter 8, the McKinley Park Hotel had burned in September 1972, and due to the frenetic efforts of all parties involved, a new McKinley Park Station Hotel was ready for park visitors in late May 1973. For the next several years, NPS officials repeatedly mentioned the hotel's "temporary" role, but in the mid- to late-1970s—with the much larger debate over the fate of Alaska's public lands being debated both by administration officials and by Congress—the hotel issue receded into the background. Throughout this period, and on into the 1980s, a small number of conservationists advocated

During the early to mid-1980s, as noted above, the park underwent a series of planning efforts, most of which included an analysis of the park hotel. Between 1981 and 1983, agency officials wrote an environmental assessment (EA) and development concept plan (DCP) for the park road corridor. In March 1982, the draft DCP—which echoed similar comments in the park's February 1981 interim DCP—noted that "The McKinley Park Station Hotel will receive extensive renovation, primarily to replace obsolete facilities

Stephen P. Martin served as Acting Superintendent of Denali National Park and Preserve for 5 months before becoming Superintendent, a post he held from March 1995 to January 2002. NPS Photo



and conform with life/safety codes. ... The hotel will not be expanded.” These comments were repeated in the final (February 1983) park road corridor DCP.²³⁵

Soon after the park’s development concept plan was released, the NPS’s plans regarding the park hotel abruptly changed. Development advocates, either inside or outside the agency, recognized that the NPS maintained a Visitor Facility Fund, which was a repository for concessioner franchise fees. The existence of this fund brought forth a \$12,250,000 proposal to replace the deteriorating hotel, gift shop and support facilities with new, permanent replacements. That fall, regional officials forwarded the proposal to NPS Director Russ Dickenson. In February 1984, Dickenson rejected the proposal, noting the extent to which the project would deplete the fund. But soon after that rejection, funding for the hotel project was quickly inserted into the Service-wide Line Item Construction Program. (This is the program through which the majority of all large NPS construction or rehabilitation projects are accomplished.) The Denali Park Hotel project was given a relatively high priority within that program. Advance planning monies were appropriated in fiscal year 1985, and in February 1985 a \$400,000 contract was awarded to the Anchorage architectural firm of Maynard and Partch for preliminary site analysis and design. At that time, the construction cost for the reconstruction work was an estimated \$11,200,000. Predictions called for on-the-ground work to begin during the 1987 fiscal year.²³⁶ The park’s draft general manage-

ment plan, which was released in March 1985, reflected the agency’s new direction; it stated that “the reconstruction of the Denali National Park Hotel, a \$14 million construction project, is scheduled to begin in 1987.”

Later in 1985, the NPS decided to once again examine the necessity of a new park hotel, and by year’s end the park’s revised GMP proposed the preparation of a new DCP that would focus specifically on the park hotel. During 1986, the scope of the proposed DCP was further refined, and the park’s final GMP, issued in November of that year, noted that “An amendment to the 1983 *Development Concept Plan* is being developed for the park entrance. It will discuss the options of removing the hotel from the park, replacing or rehabilitating the existing temporary structures, or building a new hotel. The public will be involved in the development and review of the DCP/EA.”²³⁷ The entrance-area DCP, in fact, was initiated before the close of 1985, and by December 1986 the document had been finalized and was awaiting public comment.²³⁸

In June 1987 the draft DCP—billed as an addendum to the 1983 DCP/EA—was released to the public. By this time the NPS, after analyzing the hotel’s structural and safety-related problems, had concluded that “the construction of a new hotel with the same capacity is now considered a better choice than renovating the existing hotel.” The draft DCP, therefore, offered two choices: either replace the existing hotel with a new hotel (to be located between the existing hotel and the railroad depot), or remove the existing hotel. A key to the first option was that the new hotel would provide an “array of alternative activities for people who were not scheduled for a bus tour” that “would help visitors gain a better understanding and appreciation of Denali’s resources.” Given that intent, the agency planned to convert its four-year-old auditorium into a visitor center, and it also planned to offer easy access to sled-dog demonstrations, horseback rides, scenic overflights, and Nenana River float trips. To give the public a chance to weigh in on the hotel option, the agency offered a 60-day public comment period, to August 14; midway through that process, it held public meetings in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and at the park. The following March, the agency chose the first option; it announced its intention to build a new, 140-room hotel to replace the present Denali Park Hotel and to open up an adjacent visitor center.²³⁹

Given the final go-ahead, work on the project edged forward. In 1989, however, a new Anchorage architectural firm, GDM Incorporated, was



This 1980s view of the McKinley Park Hotel area shows concession employee housing in a clearing on the right, the temporary hotel in the center, and the original 1938 dormitory and powerhouse near the hotel. NPS Interp. Collection, #3502, Denali National Park and Preserve

asked to take over hotel planning. By the end of the year the park superintendent noted that “there was a very charged and energized feeling from everyone involved that this time the project would be carried to completion.”²⁴⁰

During 1990 and 1991, design work on the hotel slowly progressed to completion, and top officials at both the park and the agency’s regional office continued to push the project forward. A presentation prepared after a May 1991 work session predicted that the hotel would open in June 1994. During this period, however, an increasing number of people began to argue against the project. Some did so on cost grounds, because a project budgeted at \$7 million during the late 1980s had ballooned to \$25 million in late 1990 and to \$32 million in early 1991; the \$7 million, moreover, would have been paid for by the park concessioner, while the proposed \$25 million and \$32 million price tags were to be funded by the U.S. taxpayer. Other people decried the increasingly large footprint of the proposed hotel, inasmuch as the hotel complex that was proposed in 1988 would occupy 7 acres of ground, but by 1991 it had swelled to 13.5 acres. Several protested on environmental grounds, noting that the brief environmental analysis conducted as part of the 1982 park-road corridor DCP was insufficient

to address National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) criteria. And still others saw that the hotel was increasingly unnecessary, because of the large and increasing number of hotel rooms on land just outside of the park’s eastern entrance. The first organized group to come out against the hotel during this period was the Healy-based “No Hotel Committee,” which issued a long manifesto on the subject in 1990. Before long, this committee was joined by the Denali Citizens Council (which had supported a new hotel in 1987) and a number of park employees, acting on an individual basis.²⁴¹

These protests forced NPS officials to take another look at the hotel issue. In August 1991 the agency’s new regional director, John M. Morehead, noted that “to adequately address the concerns expressed by the Denali Citizens Council and other local residents with regard to NEPA compliance, we now propose to consolidate and evaluate all changes by producing an amendment/environmental assessment to the 1983 DCP ... Public review of the document will include a series of public meetings.”²⁴² Morehead’s proposal resulted in a March 1992 public review process, after which park officials released a new plan amendment. That draft document stated that the new hotel (which was “designed to

be symbolic of the Alaska wilderness rather than a ... collection of architecturally unrelated buildings”) would be just 115 feet east of the present hotel, but the proposed camper services complex and the hostel would be located near Riley Creek Campground, not adjacent to the hotel, as had been suggested earlier. Park headquarters would move to a new wing of the existing park auditorium, the shuttle bus parking area would be moved to an area between the sewage lagoon and Parks Highway, and Riley Creek Campground would be expanded by 50 sites, and a new concessioner’s employee dining room would be constructed. Other improvements were planned as well. That July, Morehead ruled that the proposed project was sufficiently minor that no environmental impact statement was required.²⁴³

Meanwhile, project planning continued. The project schedule called for a final review of plans in mid-May of 1992, a groundbreaking later that year, and the project’s completion in the spring of 1995. By the spring of 1992, the cost for the proposed new hotel had increased to \$34.6 million, and scores of additional hotel rooms had been built near the park’s eastern entrance. The park concessioner, moreover, had still not agreed to commit to a financial sponsorship for construction of the new park hotel. These and other factors brought continued, and increasingly pointed, protest letters to Interior Department officials.

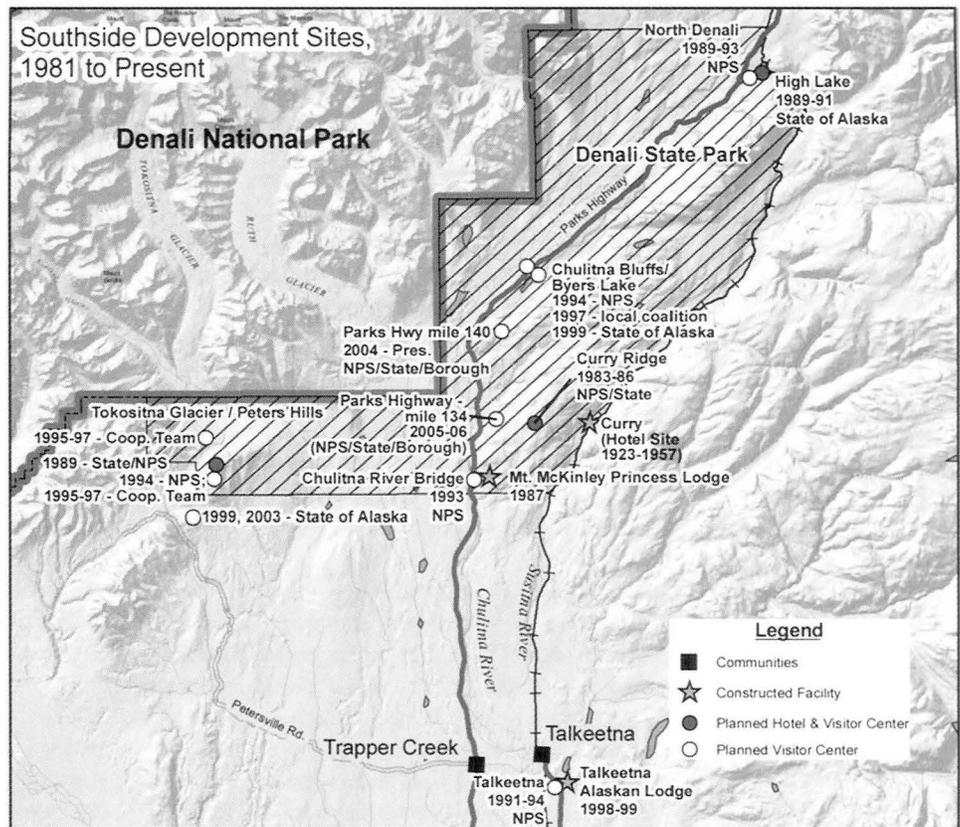
Those letters, individually or collectively, apparently piqued the curiosity of the Interior Department’s Office of Inspector General, which announced—much to the surprise of NPS officials—that it would perform a project audit. That audit began in mid-May, and it was completed when it issued its report in September. The report concluded that a new 140-room hotel was unnecessary because there was enough private lodging outside the park entrance to satisfy demand, and because the hotel’s \$325-per-square-foot construction cost was more than three times that of outside enterprises. That report was soon shared with the project’s prime sponsor, U.S. Senator Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), along with other legislators and administration officials. In early December 1992, Stevens went over the report with NPS Director James Ridenour. Shortly afterward, Stevens capitulated; noting that “we have better ways to spend the money to meet the needs of Alaskans,” he stated that “I’m not going to push forward to add to the budget of that hotel.”²⁴⁴ Stevens’s decision brought to an end all efforts to construct a new park hotel. Still to be decided, however, was whether—or for how long—the NPS would allow the existing hotel to remain operating.

Continuing Frustrations Over South Side Development

An issue similar to that of the Denali Park Hotel, and that also defied an easy solution, was whether a new hotel would be constructed south of the Alaska Range. During the general management planning process of 1983-86, the NPS and the State of Alaska had cooperated on a plan for “the development of a full range of lodging and other visitor services ... on the south end of Curry Ridge.” That plan called for “major involvement from the private sector.”²⁴⁵ By the time the GMP was released, however, Alaska was in the midst of hard times brought on by post-oil-boom economic doldrums and low oil prices, and neither the State of Alaska nor private enterprise was in any mood to seriously consider such a bold new development project. In addition, scattered environmentalists and local residents publicly opposed the siting of any major facilities on Curry Ridge.²⁴⁶

Given those conditions, state and federal officials, acting jointly, stepped back and considered a variety of site options. The NPS, as part of that effort, provided \$100,000, and moved to contract a detailed study of various potential development sites. State officials felt likewise, but given the state’s finances, they were unable to provide near-term financial assistance. In June 1987, private developers announced that they were moving ahead with plans to build a \$4 million, 150-room lodge-convention center at the south end of Denali State Park, just north of the Chulitna River bridge; they noted that construction would begin “within the next several weeks” with a 1988 completion date. State and federal officials applauded the move; planners, however, pinned their hopes on a larger, \$20 million to \$40 million project at an as-yet-undetermined site in the state park.²⁴⁷ (See Map 3.) In 1988, the NPS and the State of Alaska agreed to work cooperatively on the completion of the Denali State Park master plan, a process that had been started in 1986.²⁴⁸ That plan, which was completed in June 1989, called for the construction of a 200-room hotel and a visitor center at the state park’s north end: more specifically near so-called High Lake, just south of the Parks Highway-Alaska Railroad intersection. (This was in the same general area as Chulitna Pass, where Economic Development Administration contractors had selected a hotel site back in December 1968; see Chapter 7.) In addition, the plan called for a 20-room wilderness lodge in the Tokositna area and a road (with a new Chulitna River bridge) from the north-end hotel to nearby Eldridge Glacier.²⁴⁹

Five months after the completion of the revised state park master plan, State Parks Director Neil



Map 3. Southside Development Sites, 1981 to Present.

Johannsen decided that the state would forge ahead, on its own, with the High Lake hotel project; he hoped to solicit bids during the winter of 1989-90, with construction to begin in the summer of 1991. Two months later, in January 1990, Alaska Governor Steve Cowper did what he could to back Johannsen; he announced that the state would forego \$4 million in federal funds for the project in order to skirt any delays that might be incurred in preparing a federal environmental impact statement. Instead, Cowper asked the Alaska legislature for \$4.4 million to fund a visitor center and an additional \$10 million for a road and utilities related to the proposed hotel. State officials promised, at the time, that they would prepare an environmental study for the project. They admitted, however, that the hotel construction plan was on a “fast track,” which meant that the environmental study might not be begun until after a potential developer signed a contract; furthermore, the study might not be completed until after construction had begun. Environmental groups, chagrined at the perceived high-handed action, filed suit against the state that spring. Almost a year later, in February 1991, Superior Court Judge Victor Carlson sided with the plaintiffs and demanded that the hotel plan go through a new series of hearings and studies before construction could begin. Johannsen and other Hickel administration officials viewed the ruling, at the time, as only a temporary setback, and they considered appealing the judge’s decision. But

no such appeal was filed, and based on ongoing NPS actions (see below), the state apparently abandoned its effort to steer the construction of a High Lake hotel and visitor center.²⁵⁰

While state officials pushed their own agenda regarding a south side hotel, NPS officials did what they could to push for visitor facilities in the state park. To fulfill promises that had been made in the national park and preserve’s 1986 general management plan, and also to fulfill the agency’s obligations pertaining to the state park master plan, NPS planners in October 1989 announced that they would prepare an environmental impact statement for a “South Denali Visitor Center,” which would be located at one of two sites near the state park’s northern boundary.²⁵¹ That idea quickly faded, and by August 1990 planners from the agency’s Denver Service Center (DSC)—fueled with a \$385,000 Congressional appropriation—had begun work on a development concept plan (DCP) for the park’s so-called “South Slope.” By the end of 1990, DSC planners had concluded that the plan, still in its preliminary stages, would focus on visitor centers in Talkeetna and Denali State Park; it would also allow increased recreational access across the Chulitna River.²⁵²

In March 1991, NPS planners completed a draft environmental assessment that brought new controversy to the south slope development issue. That report, released in July, proposed a \$15 million,

Here federal and state planners visit one of the proposed southside visitor center sites offering this spectacular view of the Tokositna Glacier, Mt. McKinley and the main Alaska Range. Pictured in this 1995 photo, left to right, are J.D. Swed, South District Ranger; Dave Porter, Alaska State Parks; Bob Barbee, Alaska Regional Director; John Quinley, Public Information Officer; and Nancy Swanton, Park Planner. NPS Photo



14,000-square-foot visitor center on a bluff about a mile south of Talkeetna. The proposed visitor center was located next to a proposed 250-room, low-rise hotel; both were located on land owned by Cook Inlet Region, Inc., which was the Native regional corporation in that area.²⁵³ Talkeetna residents were relatively unconcerned about the proposed new hotel; one local shop owner said that the hotel was “a fantastic idea ... we could absorb the number of guests they would bring in.” But there was widespread opposition to the visitor center, because it would bring an estimated 2,000 daily tourists to Talkeetna. Many local residents, who loved Talkeetna’s “small town charm,” railed against the “industrial tourism” (and the attendant tour bus traffic and “Disneyland atmosphere”) that the visitor center would bring. Given those fears, more than 500 residents signed a petition asking the agency to place the facility elsewhere. The NPS, for its part, recognized that the Talkeetna site was one of two eyed by agency planners; the other was the High Lake site (near the north end of Denali State Park) that the State of Alaska had proposed as part of its state park master planning effort. Park superintendent Russ Berry suggested that the Talkeetna site would be easier to get through the planning stages, inasmuch as the High Lake site “could face years of full-blown environmental impact studies to pass muster.” Public opinion, however, was key to the process. The public—which was apparently evenly divided according to one informal poll—was given until August 31 to give the NPS its opinions on the matter.²⁵⁴

For the next 18 months, NPS officials continued their work on the South Slope DCP. In

February 1992, the NPS issued an “alternatives workbook” for the plan. That workbook offered four alternatives, one or more of which recommended visitor centers at either Talkeetna, the Chulitna River crossing, at the north end of Denali State Park, or a site just north of the state park boundary. None of these alternatives recommended hotels, however, and the NPS noted that it had made no decisions regarding visitor centers or other improvements.²⁵⁵ In the midst of this process, a number of Talkeetna residents continued to protest the proposed Talkeetna-area visitor center, which was illustrated in just one alternative; in addition to previously stated concerns about the potential loss of their small-town character, one resident complained about “people who buy a package deal and really don’t spend any money locally,” while other local residents worried that their property taxes would be raised to cover increased sanitation, water, and other infrastructure improvements.²⁵⁶ But officials in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, by contrast, were generally in favor of the visitor center project; the Borough assembly had voiced its support for the project in a spring 1991 resolution. At a March 1992 assembly meeting in Palmer, just before the April 10 deadline for comments, the borough discussed the idea of placing an advisory vote on the project on the May ballot. But protests from Talkeetna residents, plus the dubious legality of orchestrating such a vote, resulted in the assembly backing away from that course of action.²⁵⁷ In late March 1992, the assembly held a meeting in Talkeetna, where a solid majority of the 140-plus attendees favored the project.²⁵⁸

A year later, in May 1993, the NPS finally released its draft South Slope Development Concept Plan. As it pertained to facilities development, the agency considered four alternatives: 1) no action, 2) a 16,000-square-foot Talkeetna-area visitor center, 3) a 16,000-square-foot visitor center at the north end of Denali State Park, and 4) the immediate construction of a 10,000-square-foot visitor center just north of the Chulitna River highway crossing, combined with the possible future construction of a 16,000-square-foot visitor center near Talkeetna. None of the alternatives proposed a new access road across the Chulitna, as DSC planners had considered in 1990; all three of the action-related alternatives, by contrast, recommended a new 30-50 site campground just south of Cantwell. Among the plan's four alternatives, the NPS chose the last as its proposed action. The public was originally given until September 17 to comment on the agency's draft plan; that deadline, however, was later extended to November 1.²⁵⁹

Agency planners—who hailed from the Denver Service Center—quickly recognized that some Alaskans were opposed to the draft plan. Those most vehement in their opposition were Talkeetna-area residents, who loudly denounced any plan that included a visitor center or hotel in their midst. So strong was their opposition that park superintendent Russ Berry agreed to proceed no further with the south slope planning process; Berry, in fact, recalled the document and had a number of copies destroyed.²⁶⁰

In an attempt to breathe new life into the planning process, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt stepped in. Babbitt, as noted above, had visited the park in mid-August 1993, and he was obviously concerned about the park's future. So he directed the NPS to study the matter in greater detail. The following March, agency director Roger Kennedy wrote that

Denali National Park, remote, wild and increasingly popular, should serve as a model park, to be emulated by others in the System, but a high degree of controversy within the State of Alaska has slowed progress toward this goal. The Secretary [therefore] wishes to convene a Committee of diverse individuals who can work together toward recommendations which, if implemented, can serve to resolve these seemingly intractable [sic] conflicts.

According to Kennedy's letter, this working group—which would report to the National

Park System Advisory Board—would be called the Denali National Park Committee. (It was later known, more informally, as the Denali Task Force.) This 16-member committee was chaired by Advisory Board member Loren Croxton, who hailed from Petersburg, Alaska. The South Slope was one of the three issues it was asked to decide; more specifically, the panel was asked to “review and make recommendations on a framework within which the Federal, State and Borough governments can jointly develop a regional recreation management plan.”²⁶¹ Given the Secretary's initiative, agency personnel deferred its planning efforts until after the Task Force completed its work. The Task Force completed its report in October 1994, and the full National Park System Advisory Board accepted its recommendations two months later. The report concluded that “all major landowners and interest groups”—including the two Native regional corporations as well as the federal, state, and borough governments—“must be involved in development planning to ensure that visitor centers, lodging and access improvements are coordinated, and conflicts and objectives are comprehensively addressed.” The group recommended small visitor centers at three south slope sites (Tokositna, Byers Lake, and Talkeetna). And it further recommended that “lodging and other primarily commercial facilities should only be developed on private lands.”²⁶²

NPS planners positively responded to the Task Force report. For the time being, however, efforts to complete the South Slope Development Concept Plan were at a standstill. The process by which this plan was completed, and the ramifications of that plan, are discussed in Chapter 10.

Notes - Chapter 9

¹ 64th Congress, Public 353 (February 26, 1917), Sections 5 and 6.

² Based on a 1945 judicial ruling after President Franklin Roosevelt had established Jackson Hole National Monument in Wyoming, Carter and his Interior Secretary, Cecil Andrus, felt that a detailed resource description was necessary to fend off any legal challenges based on their application of the Antiquities Act. See David H. Getches, "Managing the Public Lands: The Authority of the Executive to Withdraw Lands," *Natural Resources Journal* 22 (April 1982), 305; Hal Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts* (Champaign, Univ. of Illinois Press, March 1989), 216-20.

³ Proclamation 4616, December 1, 1978, as noted in the *Federal Register* 43 (December 5, 1978), 57035.

⁴ Public Law 96-487 (December 2, 1980), Section 202(3)(a).

⁵ As noted in Frank Williss's "*Do Things Right the First Time: The National Park Service and the Alaska National Interest Lands Act of 1980*," revised edition (Anchorage, NPS, February 2005), 133, NPS Director William Whalen hired Cook as Area Director (in late 1978) under the condition that Cook would have the latitude and authority of a regional director, and that as soon as an Alaska lands bill passed, he would receive that designation.

⁶ Williss, "*Do Things Right the First Time*," 149, 152f7; NPS, *Historic Listing of National Park Service Officials*, May 1, 1986, 75, 153.

⁷ NPS, *Historic Listing*, 153; Robert C. Cunningham, interview by the author, October 13, 2004.

⁸ U.S. Department of the Interior, *Budget Justifications, National Park Service*, various years.

⁹ *Federal Register* 43 (December 26, 1978), 60251-58; *Federal Register* 44 (June 28, 1979), 37731-51.

¹⁰ *Federal Register* 46 (January 19, 1981), 5643.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5641-65; *Federal Register* 46 (June 17, 1981), 31835-64; Frank Norris, *Alaska Subsistence; a National Park Service Management History* (Anchorage, NPS, 2002), 88-92.

¹² Cunningham interview, October 13, 2004.

¹³ In July 1975 the newly-completed highway between Anchorage and Fairbanks was renamed to honor George Parks, a former Alaska Governor (1925-33), surveyor, and General Land Office administrator. See Alaska Northwest, *The Milepost* (Anchorage, the author, 1985), 217.

¹⁴ *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 16, 1981, A-1, A-3. Judith Guevara and Maria Elena Garfros de Silva, both from Mexico City, died at the scene, while Margaret Chappell of Little Rock, Arkansas died in Fairbanks. One or two others may have died later, however; a June 17 *Anchorage Daily Times* editorial (p. A-10) noted that four had died in the accident, and a June 21, 1983 *Times* article (p. B-2) noted five deaths.

¹⁵ After June 1981, tour bus traffic has generally gone west to Stony Hill (on clear days) or to an area, known as the "soapberry patch," on the east side of the Toklat River (on days without a McKinley view). In 1990, the cloudy-day turnaround point shifted to a cleared area just west of the Toklat River and just north of the park road. Steve Carwile interview, July 27, 2006.

¹⁶ *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 17, 1981, A-1, A-3, A-10; June 19, 1981, A-1, A-3; "Memorandum in Support of Motion for Summary Judgment" in *ARA Services, Inc., et al. v. U.S.* (F83-011 Civil), 1.

¹⁷ *ARA Services, et al. v. U.S.* (F83-011 Civil) in Alaska District Court was decided in the government's favor on May 28, 1986. The concessioner, however, asked the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals to review the case, and in 1987 the Circuit Court reversed the District Court's decision. See *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 21, 1983, B-2; SAR, 1987, 7.

¹⁸ Federal Highway Administration, *McKinley Park Highway, 1978 Study Report, McKinley Park Station to Wonder Lake*, 2-12; NPS, Pacific Northwest Region, *Road Surface Treatment Planning Analysis, Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska*, February 1, 1979, 3-4.

¹⁹ Federal Highway Administration, *Road Inventory and Needs Study, Mount McKinley National Park*, 1980, Study 184/D-47, TIC Collection; NPS, *Park Road Rehabilitation Program, DENA, Environmental Assessment* (Denver, the author, February 1982), 1, 9-10.

²⁰ *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 23, 1981, B-1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, June 23, 1981, B-1.

²² NPS, *Environmental Assessment for Park Road Rehabilitation Program*, 21-22.

²³ *Ibid.*, 22-32, 55-62. The possible paving of the park road was also considered, and rejected, in a road corridor planning effort that concluded just a month after the road rehabilitation program report. NPS, *Development Concept Plan, Park Road Corridor, DENA, Environmental Assessment* (Denver, the author, March 1982), 95-99.

²⁴ SAR, 1982, 3; Cunningham interview, October 13, 2004.

²⁵ John E. Cook to Manager, Denver Service Center, December 9, 1981, in Roads files, DENA.

²⁶ This act passed Congress on December 23, 1982; President Reagan signed it on January 6, 1983, and it became Public Law 97-424.

- ²⁷ James N. Hall (FHWA) to Denis P. Galvin (DSC), May 2, 1983, in Roads files, DENA; Stanley T. Albright to Russell Dickenson (Director NPS), July 9, 1984, in preface to NPS, *Park Road Standards*, July 1984.
- ²⁸ Federal Highways Administration, *DNP Route 10, Denali National Park, Road Improvement Study from State Route 3 to Kantishna* (draft), May 1983, 1, 6a, 21. Page 6a was inserted during the review period after the completion of the May 1983 study.
- ²⁹ NPS, *Park Road Standards*, July 1984, 29.
- ³⁰ Robert Cunningham to Director DSC, June 15, 1983; Jerald M. Lorenz to Assistant Manager, DSC, July 5, 1983; Kenneth Raithel, Jr. to Director ARO, July 13, 1983; all in Roads files, DENA; Federal Highway Administration, *DNP Route 10, Denali National Park, Road Improvement Study from State Route 3 to Kantishna* (final), February 1984. The final report was identical to the draft except for the insertion of page 6a and Appendix G.
- ³¹ Acting Regional Director, ARO to Manager, DSC, September 30, 1983, in Roads files, DENA.
- ³² FHWA, *Feasibility Study for Upgrading the Denali Park Road at Sable Pass, Polychrome Pass and Eielson Bluffs*, preliminary draft, 1985, in DENA Roads files; Brad Ebel email, March 14, 2007.
- ³³ SAR, 1982, 3; SAR, 1983, 1; Cunningham to Jack O'Neale (Maintenance General Foreman), August 14, 1985, in "Rehab Program/Pits" section of "Road Rehabilitation" 3-ring binder, Joe Van Horn Collection, DENA.
- ³⁴ SAR, 1986, 4; NPS, *Environmental Assessment for Park Road Rehabilitation Program*, 28-31.
- ³⁵ FHWA, *Bridge Inspection Reports* (various), June 1980 (TIC 184/D7A-24A); NPS, *Road Surface Treatment Planning Analysis*, 6; SAR, 1980, 6.
- ³⁶ SAR, 1973, 8; Donald F. Bolton, *Status Report for Savage River Bridge, MOMC, National Park Route NP 1-A* (Juneau, FHWA), November 1970, TIC 184/D129; FHWA, *Study Report No. 2, Savage River Bridge, NPS Route 1-A, MOMC, Alaska*, 1980, TIC 184/D44.
- ³⁷ NPS, *Savage River Bridge Replacement, Environmental Assessment* (Denver, NPS), March 1981, TIC 184/1742.
- ³⁸ SAR, 1983, 1. Bridges were replaced over six small creeks east of Savage River as well as Hogan Creek (mile 21.7), Betty's Brook (mile 63.2), and Lake Creek (mile 88.5). Source: various FHWA bridge inspection reports, in DENA TIC Collection.
- ³⁹ SAR, 1987, 3; NPS, *Environmental Assessment, Replace Toklat River and Moose Creek Bridges* (Denver, the author), June 1985.
- ⁴⁰ Federal Highway Administration, *Bridge Inspection Reports* for various Denali Park Road bridges, June 2007. Of the 12 major bridges in the park, the shortest estimated remaining life was Rock Creek (20 years); at the other extreme, four bridges had a predicted 50-year estimated lifetime.
- ⁴¹ Public Law 96-487 (December 2, 1980), Sec. 1301(a). Sec. 604(b) of the National Parks and Recreation Act (Public Law 95-625), passed on November 10, 1978, stated that general management plans for each of its units needed to be "prepared and revised in a timely manner," while Sec. 1301 of ANILCA specifically asked that these plans be completed by December 1985. *U.S. Statutes at Large*, vol. 92 (1978), p. 3518 and vol. 94 (1980), p. 2472.
- ⁴² SAR, 1980, 1; NPS, "Task Directive for the Preparation of a General Management Plan for Mount McKinley National Park/Denali National Monument," May 30, 1980, in "D18 – Planning Programs and Master Plans, 1979-80" file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.
- ⁴³ NPS, *Supplement to Interim Development Concept Plan, Headquarters/Hotel Area* (Denver, the author, February 1981), 1.
- ⁴⁴ George S. Stroud, *History of the Concession at Denali National Park (formerly Mount McKinley National Park)*, unpub. mss. (Anchorage, NPS, March 1985), 22, 26-32.
- ⁴⁵ NPS, *Supplement to Interim Development Concept Plan, Headquarters/Hotel Area*, 2.
- ⁴⁶ SAR, 1980, 2.
- ⁴⁷ Stroud, *History of the Concession*, 33; NPS, *Supplement to the Interim Development Concept Plan, Headquarters/Hotel Area*, 7-16; SAR, 1980, 2, 4. The need to replace the bus barn and employee dining room, and alternatives on where they should be located, were also addressed in the agency's *Environmental Assessment, Bus Maintenance Facility / Employee Dining Facility, Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska* (Denver, NPS), February 1981.
- ⁴⁸ *Federal Register* 46 (March 13, 1981), 16737; *Federal Register* 46 (April 1, 1981), 19859-60.
- ⁴⁹ Stroud, *History of the Concession*, 28, 33; Robert Cunningham interview.
- ⁵⁰ Stroud, *History of the Concession*, 28. In 1982, the NPS awarded a \$1.2 million contract for Denali shuttle-bus service that summer to Burton-Carver Transportation Inc. of Soldotna; the following year that contract was renewed for \$992,000. SAR, 1982, 3; *Anchorage Daily Times*, May 14, 1983, B-2. Other bus contractors during the 1980s and early 1990s included Transportation and Marketing Service (or Systems), Tundra Tours, Mayflower Contract Services, and Laidlaw Transit. SAR, 1987, 8; SAR, 1988, 1; Ralph Tingey interview, May 17, 2006; Steve Carwile interview, May 25, 2006 and May 3, 2007.

⁵¹ The only known exceptions to the concessioner's monopoly on park tours during the pre-ANILCA period were the various mountaineering guide services on Mt. McKinley and other Alaska Range peaks (see Chapter 13), plus Camp Denali's tradition of conducting hikes at various locations toward the western end of the park road. Camp Denali's hikes, which began during the 1950s, technically violated the terms of the park concessions contract, but they were freely tolerated because they had no discernable impact on the concessioner's profitability. Language in ANILCA's Section 1307(a) has allowed Camp Denali to continue those hikes in recent years.

⁵² See ANILCA (P.L. 96-487), Sec. 1307; *U.S. Statutes at Large* 94 (1980), 2479-80.

⁵³ NPS, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory, Alaska Region*, annual issues, 1981 to 1995. The development of the CUL system in 1980-81 is discussed in Frank Norris's *Tourism in Katmai Country* (Anchorage, NPS, 1992), 137-38.

⁵⁴ NPS, *Development Concept Plan, Park Road Corridor, Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska, Environmental Assessment* (Denver, the author, March 1982), 3.

⁵⁵ SAR, 1982, 3; NPS, *DCP, Park Road Corridor, EA*, 35-67.

⁵⁶ NPS, *DCP, Park Road Corridor, EA*, 52-57. Teklanika Campground was the only site beyond Savage River that allowed recreational vehicle camping.

⁵⁷ NPS, *Development Concept Plan, Park Road Corridor, Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska* (Denver, the author, February 1983), 92-93.

⁵⁸ SAR, 1983, 3; NPS, *Development Concept Plan, Park Road Corridor, Environmental Assessment*, 55-57; NPS, *Development Concept Plan, Park Road Corridor*, 54-55.

⁵⁹ Stroud, *History of the Concession*, 33-34; SAR, 1982, 1; 1983, 1-2.

⁶⁰ Williss, "Do Things Right the First Time," 150.

⁶¹ The draft GMP for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve was completed in May 1982 and finalized in August 1984; for Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve in April 1983 and September 1984; for Kenai Fjords National Park in May 1983 and June 1984; and for Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve in September 1983 and January 1985.

⁶² SAR, 1983, 3; SAR, 1984, 2; NPS, *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Assessment, Land Protection Plan, Wilderness Suitability Review, DENA* (Denver?, the author, March 1985), 125.

⁶³ NPS, *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Assessment*, 9, 76-77.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 10. The reference to "250,000 people per year" on page 10 was a misprint; instead, it should have read "25,000 people per year" for ten years, thus allowing for an additional 250,000 people. Also see NPS, *General Management Plan, Land Protection Plan, Wilderness Suitability Review, DENA* (Denver, the author, November 1986), 145.

⁶⁵ This study, in its present form, was entitled "Wildlife Viewing and the Mandatory Public Transportation System in Denali National Park" (1984). It was later published as "The Controlled Traffic System and Associated Wildlife Responses in Denali National Park," *Arctic* 39 (September 1986), 195-203.

⁶⁶ NPS, *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Assessment*, 13, 15.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶⁹ NPS, *Draft GMP/IEA*, 19-20, 146-50; Alaska Division of Parks, *Alaska State Park System: Southcentral Region Plan*, February 1982, 65. The NPS voiced its support for the Curry Ridge site; the state's similar preference was an apparent outgrowth of recent Tokositna Project feasibility study (see Chapter 8) to include Curry Ridge. By 1985, both the state and federal governments felt that a major development site near Tokositna Glacier "appears impractical."

⁷⁰ *Anchorage Daily News*, October 30, 1984, C-1, C-3; *Anchorage Daily Times*, November 13, 1984, A-10; NPS, *Draft GMP/IEA*, 20-25.

⁷¹ Meetings were held June 3 in Fairbanks; June 4 in Healy; June 6 in Talkeetna; and June 12 in Anchorage.

⁷² SAR for Katmai National Park and Preserve, 1985, 2; *Anchorage Times*, December 7, 1985, A-4; *Anchorage Daily News*, December 7, 1985, C-2. The State of Alaska's response was more than one hundred pages long, and the Alaska Land Use Council (a consultative body that had been established by Sec. 1201 of ANILCA) spent considerable time deliberating the various plans. Sandy Rabinowitch interview, April 17, 2006.

⁷³ NPS, *General Management Plan, Land Protection Plan, Wilderness Suitability Review, Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska, revised draft* (Anchorage, the author, December 1985), 14. The revised draft, oddly, stated higher 1984 traffic volumes than was shown in the initial draft; this recalibration thus allowed the number of buses at "full plan implementation" to be 10.6% higher than it would have been otherwise.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 20-21, 27; NPS, *General Management Plan*, November 1986, iii. Ironically, the revised draft makes no mention of these two changes, but the final [November 1986] GMP, in its master list of changes, makes these assertions.

⁷⁵ NPS, *Draft GMP* (March 1985) and *Revised Draft GMP* (December 1985), inside front cover.

⁷⁶ NPS, *General Management Plan*, November 1986, v, 17.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 22, 29.

⁷⁸ SAR, 1986, 1; 1987, 8; *Anchorage Daily News*, January 16, 1987, D-10.

⁷⁹ While many agency documents, including various issues of the *National Park Index*, stated that the "old park" contained 1,900,000 acres of wilderness, the agency's final wilderness recommendations (in September 1988, p. 10) stated that of 2,214,273 acres in the "old park," 2,124,783 acres (96%) was designated wilderness.

⁸⁰ NPS, *Draft General Management Plan (DENA)*, March 1985, 69-71.

⁸¹ NPS, *General Management Plan (DENA)*, revised draft, December 1985, 89-95.

⁸² NPS, *General Management Plan (DENA)*, November 1986, 109-15.

⁸³ NPS, *Final Environmental Impact Statement, Wilderness Recommendation, Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska* (Denver, the author, September 1988), 10.

⁸⁴ SAR, 1987, 4.

⁸⁵ "Summary Chart: National Park Service, Alaska Wilderness Proposals;" Richard J. Stenmark to Director NPS, May 23, 1988, both in Judy Alderson files, AKRO; *Anchorage Daily Times*, March 4, 1988, B-8.

⁸⁶ NPS, *Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Wilderness Recommendation, Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska* (Denver, the author, June 1988), vii, 6, 20; NPS, *Final Wilderness EIS, DENA* (September 1988), 143, 187-89.

⁸⁷ NPS, *Draft EIS, Wilderness Recommendation*, iii.

⁸⁸ NPS, *Final EIS*, 14, 20-24, 66-79; Boyd Evison to Director NPS, November 10, 1988, in Judy Alderson files, AKRO; William P. Mott, "Record of Decision," December 1, 1988, document 184/88-43A, TIC Collection; Judy Alderson interview, May 2, 2006.

⁸⁹ Joe Van Horn to author, email, May 11, 2006; NPS, *General Management Plan, DENA*, November 1986, 60-61.

⁹⁰ NPS, *Final GMP, DENA*, November 1986, 72, 76-77, 80-81.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 98-101; NPS, *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study Report* (Anchorage, the author, December 1984), xiii; State of Alaska, Fourteenth Legislature, Legislative Resolve No. 4. SJR 3 was introduced by Senator Bettye Fahrenkamp (D-Fairbanks) on January 14, 1985; the resolution was ratified with Governor William Sheffield's signature on February 25. *Alaska Senate Bill History, 1985-1986*, p. 207.

⁹² NPS, "Meeting on NPS/State Land Exchange, DENA Headquarters" (attendance sheet), February 22, 1982, in "Public Lands: Lands Acquisition (1950-1990)" folder, Box 32, Denali Administrative Records Collection (DARC), DENA Archives; *Anchorage Times*, August 13, 1982, B-6; *New York Times*, September 1, 1982, 17; Frank Norris, *Legacy of the Gold Rush: An Administrative History of Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park* (Anchorage, NPS, 1996), 314-15; Joe Van Horn interview, April 20, 2007.

⁹³ NPS, *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Kantishna Hills/Dunkle Mine Study Report*, 58-66, 81-87.

⁹⁴ Senate Joint Resolution 3, in *Alaska Senate Bill History, 1985-86*, 207; various correspondence in "Public Lands: Lands Acquisition (1950-1990)" file, Box 32, DARC.

⁹⁵ Geoffrey L. Haskett to RD, Alaska Region, October 5, 1987; Garey E. Coatney to Steve Carwile, November 12, 1987; Coatney to John Neill, November 12, 1987; all in "Public Lands: Lands Acquisition, 1950-1990" file, Box 32, DARC.

⁹⁶ National Parks and Conservation Association, *Park Boundaries: Where We Draw the Line* (Washington, D.C., the author, February 1988), 508-09.

⁹⁷ Norris, *Alaska Subsistence*, 59, 89-90.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*; ANILCA (P.L. 96-487), Sec. 202(3)(a).

⁹⁹ Norris, *Alaska Subsistence*, 90-94, 98-101.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 103. Each of the seven subsistence resource commissions had nine members: three appointed by the Interior Secretary (who delegated this responsibility to the NPS), three by the Alaska governor, and three by the appropriate Regional Advisory Council. Ralph Tingey, an assistant to Superintendent Cunningham, played a key role in the appointment of federally-appointed members to the Denali SRC. Ralph Tingey interview, April 26, 2006.

¹⁰¹ Norris, *Alaska Subsistence*, 103-04; Tingey interview.

¹⁰² Norris, *Alaska Subsistence*, 104. The draft Denali GMP, released in March 1985, omitted subsistence concerns almost entirely; the final GMP released in November 1986, by contrast, contained a four-page "Subsistence Management" section plus an additional subsection related to "Contemporary Native American Concerns."

¹⁰³ Norris, *Alaska Subsistence*, 105, 281.

¹⁰⁴ Ray Collins is the current SRC chair. Norris's *Alaska Subsistence* notes the major issues over the years in which the Denali SRC has been involved.

¹⁰⁵ The agency's 1974 snowmobile regulation was implemented in conformance with sections 3 and 4 of Executive Order 11644, which was signed by President Nixon on February 8, 1972. It followed the January

1974 publication of a final environmental statement on the impacts of off-road vehicle use on the public lands. *Federal Register* 39 (April 1, 1974), 11882-83; Daniel Kuehn interview, October 11, 2004. The NPS's administrative record for a 1999 snowmobile lawsuit (*Alaska State Snowmobile Association, Inc. v. Babbitt*, in *Federal Supplement, 2nd Series*, Vol. 79 [November 8, 1999], p. 1122) mistakenly stated that the park's snowmobile prohibition had been implemented in 1972.

¹⁰⁶ Norris, *Alaska Subsistence*, 61, 137; Alaska Planning Group, *Final Environmental Statement, Proposed Mount McKinley National Park Additions, Alaska* (Washington?, U.S. Interior Department, October 1974), 123, 128. The APG at this time, did not state whether "snowmobiling" was an established form of subsistence hunting elsewhere in Alaska.

¹⁰⁷ Proclamation 4616, as noted in *Federal Register* 43 (December 5, 1978), 57035.

¹⁰⁸ *Federal Register* 44 (June 28, 1979), 37737-38. In 1978 and 1979, the NPS revised its agencywide snowmobile policy, but inasmuch as "snowmobile use in Alaskan park areas will be managed under Special Regulations which are currently being developed," officials stated that the revised policy would apply only to the "coterminous United States." *Federal Register* 44 (August 13, 1979), 47412-13.

¹⁰⁹ Public Law 96-487, Sec. 811(b); *U.S. Statutes at Large*, vol. 94 (1980), p. 2428.

¹¹⁰ P.L. 96-487, Sec. 202(3)(a) and Section 1110(a); *U.S. Statutes at Large*, vol. 94 (1980), 2382 and 2464-65.

¹¹¹ *Federal Register* 46 (June 17, 1981), 31841, 31861.

¹¹² Steve Carwile interview, October 19, 2006. A copy of the draft regulation is in Mr. Carwile's files.

¹¹³ *Federal Register* 48 (April 6, 1983), 14978-79; Anchorage Daily Times, April 6, 1983, B-12.

¹¹⁴ *Anchorage Daily News*, April 17, 1983, C-1; April 25, 1983, A-18; April 30, 1983, B-6.

¹¹⁵ *Federal Register* 48 (June 7, 1983), 26319; *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 7, 1983, B-5.

¹¹⁶ Executive Order 11644 (February 8, 1972), in *Federal Register* 37 (1972), 2877; NPS, *General Management Plan, DENA*, November 1986, 33-34, 45. The GMP also noted that only snowmachines, motorboats, and dog teams were "authorized means of access for subsistence use" in Denali National Park and Preserve. Other forms of transportation, whose "traditional" role had not been proved, were not allowed.

¹¹⁷ Ralph Tingey, interview with the author, May 16, 2006. Several snowmachines entered the "old park" in 1987, and in 1993, the park superintendent glumly noted that "mechanized intrusions into the Denali wilderness continue but the necessary tools, both in the field and regulatory, are sorely lacking." See SAR, 1987, 6; SAR, 1993, 5-6.

¹¹⁸ Supt. Dan Kuehn, in his October 11, 2004 interview, noted that he and his wife, Kate, served as chaperones for Tri-Valley's basketball team during the mid-1970s.

¹¹⁹ See Library of Congress website, <http://thomas.loc.gov>, "Bill Summary and Status" link. The various Alaska Railroad provisions were folded into H.R. 3420, the primary purpose of which was to appropriate funds to comply with the Natural Gas Pipeline Safety Act of 1968 and the Hazardous Liquid Pipeline Safety Act of 1979. This bill was sponsored by Rep. Glenn Anderson (D-Calif.). See *Congressional Record* 128 (1982), pp. 33151-54, 33274-81, 33594-95.

¹²⁰ The bill became Public Law 97-468. This law has been called the Alaska Railroad Transfer Act, but Alaska-related provisions are contained only in Title VI. The 12th Alaska legislature (1981-82) put forth several resolutions—including SJR 28, SJR 69, SJR 76, and SJR 77—that attempted to influence the evolving legislation. All failed. *Alaska Senate Bill History, 1981-1982, passim*.

¹²¹ "Alaska Railroad – History" web page (www.akrr.com/arrc119.html).

¹²² *Congressional Record* 128 (1982), pp. 33152, 33275, and 33282-83; 97th Congress, 2nd Session, Senate Report 97-479 (June 22, 1982), 15; "Running the Rails in Alaska," *National Parks* 56 (September/October 1982), 33; Alaska Railroad, "Memorandum of Rental Agreement" (Contract No. 69-25-0003-5165), April 14, 1980, in "Front Misc." file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives; Raymond C. Kremer to Alaska Railroad Corp., May 1, 1986, in "Misc." file, Box 1, Collection 00495, DENA Archives.

¹²³ *Anchorage Daily News*, December 29, 1988, C-1, C-2.

¹²⁴ *Anchorage Daily News*, October 29, 1989, M-11 to M-13.

¹²⁵ *Anchorage Daily News*, January 2, 1990, B-1, B-3; January 5, 1990, A-3.

¹²⁶ Alaska Department of Labor, *Alaska Population Overview, 1990 Census and Estimates* (Juneau?, July 1991), 132-33; Denali Borough web page (www.denaliborough.com), "Ordinances" link.

¹²⁷ Usibelli Coal Mine web page, "History" link (www.usibelli.com/chron.html).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*; *Anchorage Daily News*, December 17, 1991, B-4.

¹²⁹ *Anchorage Daily News*, April 29, 1990, C-1.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Anchorage Daily News*, March 6, 1991, D-1, D-5; April 7, 1991, E-2; www.usibelli.com/chron.html.

¹³² *Anchorage Daily News*, December 17, 1991, B-4; February 28, 1992, G-1, G-2; March 23, 1992, C-1, C-6; July 10, 1992, F-1, F-3.

¹³³ *Anchorage Daily News*, September 5, 1992, A-1.

¹³⁴ *Federal Register* 58 (February 11, 1993), 8058-59.

- ¹³⁵ *Anchorage Daily News*, December 17, 1993, D-1, D-8; *Federal Register* 59 (March 21, 1994), 13310-17; "Agreement Will Shield Denali from Pollution," *National Parks* 68 (January-February 1994), 13-14, 16.
- ¹³⁶ *Anchorage Daily News*, March 16, 1994, D-1, D-2; June 3, 1994, A-1, A-12; July 5, 1996, E-1, E-2; "Usibelli Coal Mine History" website, cited above.
- ¹³⁷ Steve Carwile interview, January 16, 2007.
- ¹³⁸ Denali Foundation web page (www.denali.org); Robert Cunningham, interview by the author, October 13, 2004; Clay Cunningham, *Yellowstone to Denali; Bears, Bison, Poachers, Thieves and Other Characters* (Denver, Outskirts Press, 2005), 128-31.
- ¹³⁹ Willie Karadis, email to Jill Boelsma, May 29, 2006.
- ¹⁴⁰ Cunningham, *Yellowstone to Denali*, 128-31; Karadis to Boelsma email, May 29, 2006; Tricia Brown, "Hostel Takeover," *Alaska Magazine* 63 (February 1997), 45-49.
- ¹⁴¹ Steve Carwile email, January 22, 2007.
- ¹⁴² SAR, 1985, 2; SAR, 1986, 3; Robert Cunningham interview, October 13, 2004. As noted in Chapter 13, the medical presence was a continuation of services that doctors had offered on the slopes of Mt. McKinley since 1982. Cunningham advertised for the headquarters position in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.
- ¹⁴³ SAR, 1987, 7; SAR, 1991, 6; SAR, 1993, 5; SAR, 1995, 9.
- ¹⁴⁴ A few injuries were also the result of criminal activity; see, for example, *Anchorage Daily News*, August 21, 1992, B-1; August 8, 2001, B-1.
- ¹⁴⁵ SAR, 1980, 2; SAR, 1983, 1; SAR, 1984, 1; *The Milepost*, various annual issues; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 13, 1989, F-8. Inasmuch as no other known motels were built in the Parks Highway commercial strip before 1987, the superintendent's 1983 description of two "24-unit motels" apparently refers to the new (1979-1980) units added to the McKinley Chalets. The tourist cabins were the Denali Crow's Nest Log Cabins.
- ¹⁴⁶ NPS, *Final GMP, DENA*, November 1986, 15; SAR, DENA, 1986, 1; SAR, DENA, 1987, 5.
- ¹⁴⁷ Ralph Tingey, interview with the author, May 17, 2006. Mr. Tingey noted that the traffic target was met by requiring Kantishna-area lodge guests to use lodge buses rather than their private vehicles; by requiring Toklat-area NPS employees to ride a bus to and from the hotel area; and by asking certain private-vehicle operators to drive the park road at night, when traffic volumes were low.
- ¹⁴⁸ SAR, DENA, for 1985, 1; 1986, 1; 1987, 4; 1988, 1; Ralph Tingey interview, May 18, 2006. Don Hummel, in his *Stealing the National Parks*, p. 313, cited a 1986 newspaper article in which ranger-naturalist Kim Heacox stated, with a dash of hyperbole, that "visitors were turned away at Denali last summer."
- ¹⁴⁹ SAR, DENA, 1989, 3; SAR, DENA, 1991, 1-2.
- ¹⁵⁰ In 1986, this facility was known as the Kantishna Road House and Bush Camp, but by 1988 it was known simply as the Kantishna Roadhouse. Today's visitor facility is just yards away from the original (1919) Kantishna Roadhouse. NPS, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory, Alaska Region*, 1986 and 1988 editions; SAR, DENA, 1987, 6; Bill Sherwonit, "No Going Back," *Alaska Magazine* 56 (April 1990), 68. As noted in the June 15, 1990 *Anchorage Daily News*, pp. C-1 and C-3, Wilson and fellow Kantishna landowner Dan Ashbrook had business interests (including the management of this property) that began in 1976 and ended in February 1988 with a settlement agreement separating Ashbrook from all tour operations. Also see "Settlement Agreement" in *Wilson, et al. v. Ashbrook et al.*, Case 4FA-88-67, February 23, 1988.
- ¹⁵¹ North Face Lodge owner Gary Crabb died on April 17, 1987. On September 25 of that year, his widow Linda Crabb sold the parcel to Wallace and Jerryne Cole, who had owned nearby Camp Denali since 1975. The Coles still own both properties. In early 1987, the lodge's capacity was still just 15 guests; the Coles' renovations apparently added only a small number to that total. *Anchorage Daily News*, April 24, 1987; transfer deed in AKRO Lands Division files; Steve Carwile interview, April 24, 2006; "Caribou, Tundra, Whitewater, Mount McKinley ... Alaska Adventures," *Sunset* 178 (June 1987), 74.
- ¹⁵² NPS, *Commercial Visitor Service Directory*, various issues, 1990-91; Sherwonit, "No Going Back," 70; Alaska Denali Tours web page (<http://www.alaskadenalitours.com>).
- ¹⁵³ Ralph Tingey interview, May 17, 2006.
- ¹⁵⁴ SAR, 1988, 2; SAR, 1989, 2; NPS, "Basic Park Issues, DENA, 1989," attachment to SAR, 1989; Steve Carwile to Jack Morehead memo, June 3, 1994, in Carwile files. As noted above and in Chapter 8, University of Alaska researcher Diane C. Tracy had researched this problem between 1973 and 1975, while Joan Beattie and Frank Singer had updated that study during the summers of 1983 and 1984. See SAR, 1973, 8; SAR, 1974, 5; SAR, 1975, 4; SAR, 1983, 2; SAR, 1984, 2; Tracy, "Human-Wildlife Interactions Along Mt. McKinley Road," in Alaska Cooperative Park Studies Unit, *Final Report: Fiscal Year 1975* (Fairbanks, UAF, 1975), 1, 4, 6, T-1 through T-85; Beattie and Singer, "Wildlife Viewing and the Mandatory Public Transportation System in Denali National Park" (1984).
- ¹⁵⁵ *Anchorage Daily News*, January 24, 1990, C-1, C-3; SAR, 1989, 1-2; SAR, 1990, 2-3.
- ¹⁵⁶ Jane Bryant email, November 6 and November 22, 2006; Steve Carwile email, November 6, 2006. The half-marathon has been run each August since its inception. Founder Denise Taylor sold the Denali Fruit Express in 2001.

¹⁵⁷ Phyllis Motsko to Jane Bryant email, February 22, 2007; Jane Bryant to author email, March 6, 2007. Mike Cobbold, who as the concessioner's transportation manager played a key role in developing the tour, noted that Superintendent Cunningham "received pressure about the tour" after its 1986 approval; this pressure, regardless of its origin, may have played a role in delaying the tour's implementation.

¹⁵⁸ Ralph Tingey interview, May 17, 2006.

¹⁵⁹ SAR, 1973, 3; SAR, 1974, 2; SAR, 1975, 3.

¹⁶⁰ As noted in the discussion of park entrance fees (see section below), these fees were implemented beginning in 1988. Congress, however, offset the budgetary benefit of entrance fees with cutbacks elsewhere, thus resulting in the same level of funding with which to operate the park's shuttle bus system.

¹⁶¹ SAR, 1991, 2-3.

¹⁶² The Concessions Policy Act (Public Law 89-249, enacted October 9, 1965) called for the renegotiation, each five years, of each concessioner's franchise fee.

¹⁶³ SAR, 1993, 3; NPS, *Environmental Assessment on the Proposed Construction of Visitor Transportation System Facilities, Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska* (November 1994), 1, 5. The bus fee, though quite high compared to what passengers had paid previously, was set in the contract to be sufficiently low so as to "not allow ARA to fully recover its operational and administrative costs associated with the system." A later report noted that the fully-amortized cost of a bus trip in 1995-96 would be \$42—more than twice the cost of the proposed bus ticket cost. *Anchorage Daily News*, July 13, 1994, A-8.

¹⁶⁴ SAR, 1993, 8; NPS, *Environmental Assessment on the Proposed Construction of Visitor Transportation System Facilities*, 1, 5.

¹⁶⁵ *Anchorage Daily News*, July 13, 1994, A-1, A-8; "NPCA and Others Fault Denali Bus Contract," *National Parks* 68 (September/October 1994), 19-20.

¹⁶⁶ SAR, 1995, 1, 4-5, 12-13; *Anchorage Daily News*, September 2, 1994, E-1, E-4; Jeannie Woodring, "Bussing Denali," *Alaska Business Monthly* 10 (November 1994), 10. In 1994, the operation of the Denali concession changed from ARA Leisure Services, Inc. to Aramark Sports and Leisure. The park concessioner was doing business as Denali Park Resorts, both before and after the name change. The company's first park concession had been at Shenandoah National Park (Virginia) in 1972. See www.aramark.com, "about/history" link; Charlie Ess, "Vacationing at Denali," *Alaska Business Monthly* 15 (August 1999), 29.

¹⁶⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, May 14, 1995, M-1. The concessioner, at first, had hoped to run the 48-passenger buses all the way out to Wonder Lake and dispense with the need for 40-passenger buses. A state highway official, however, protested that 48-passenger buses caused significantly more wear to the road surface than 40-passenger buses. In addition, an early-season test of the 48-passenger buses caused the park superintendent to conclude that they should not be used west of Eielson Visitor Center. *Anchorage Daily News*, July 13, 1994, A-8.

¹⁶⁸ As noted in Appendix A, recreational visitation to Denali dropped from 558,870 in 1991 to 490,311 in 1994.

¹⁶⁹ NPS, "Fees to be Charged Beginning in 1995 for Denali N.P. Shuttle Buses" (news release), June 6, 1994, in John Quinley files, AKRO. Berry reasoned that the key GMP data—in Table 1 on page 17—should be interpreted to state that the 20 percent increase allowed in stage 3 of the traffic plan should be on top of the 15 percent allowed in stage 1. Berry, "An Analysis of Bus Numbers, or How We Got Here," June 19, 1994, in Steve Carwile files.

¹⁷⁰ *Anchorage Daily Times*, October 2, 1979, 4; October 4, 1979, A-3. The bill that Stevens amended was H.R. 5419, which dealt with the Appalachian Trail and also authorized Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site in Massachusetts.

¹⁷¹ Public Law 96-487 (December 2, 1980), Sec. 203; 94 Stat. 2384. According to Frank Willis's ANILCA history ("*Do Things Right the First Time*", p. 128/fn 186), the entrance-fee issue was one of several "technical or perfecting" changes that were resolved between the House and Senate bills in the days immediately before President Carter signed the final bill.

¹⁷² *Anchorage Daily News*, August 23, 1983, A-12; *Anchorage Daily Times*, March 23, 1984, A-10.

¹⁷³ [Interior] Secretary [Donald Hodel] to Honorable Thomas P. O'Neill [draft]; James T. Christy to David A. Stockman, February 7, 1985; both in "Denali National Park/User Fees" folder, DENA Archives.

¹⁷⁴ *Hawaii Tribune-Herald*, July 10, 1986, 1, 12.

¹⁷⁵ P.L. 100-203, Title V, Part F, Subtitle C, in www.thomas.loc.gov; SAR, 1987, 5; Cunningham interview, October 13, 2004.

¹⁷⁶ SAR, 1988, 1; SAR 1991, 6; SAR, 1993, 5; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 12, 1994, M-2.

¹⁷⁷ Examples of these articles include the following: *Anchorage Daily Times*, August 30, 1974, 8; September 11, 1974, 47; April 22, 1976, 17; September 3, 1976, 21; Tom Walker, "Season's End in McKinley Park," *Alaska Magazine* 43 (October 1977), 93.

¹⁷⁸ See the *Anchorage Daily Times*, October 1, 1981, D-1; September 4, 1983, B-3; September 3, 1984, B-3; September 5, 1984, C-1; *Anchorage Daily News*, September 11, 1980, B-1; September 16, 1980, H-10; September 11, 1983, F-1; May 17, 1984, F-13.

- ¹⁷⁹ *Anchorage Daily News*, September 14, 1986, B-3. September 8, a week after Labor Day, was in keeping with the evolving general management plan, which stated that the shuttle bus system would operate “into the fall for as long as visitor use remains high.”
- ¹⁸⁰ *Anchorage Daily News*, September 14, 1986, B-1, B-3; August 26, 1990, K-5.
- ¹⁸¹ *Anchorage Daily News*, September 14, 1986, B-3; SAR, 1987, 5. A year later (*Anchorage Daily News*, September 13, 1987, J-1), an NPS official stated that the crowd on September 13, 1986 numbered 900 cars, not 500 as she had noted in 1986; and in 1989 (see source below), another NPS official stated that “almost 700 private vehicles” crowded into the park that day in 1986.
- ¹⁸² *Anchorage Daily News*, September 10, 1989, G-1, G-3.
- ¹⁸³ SAR, 1990, 3; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 26, 1990, K-5; Russell W. Berry, Jr. to winning applicants, August 10, 1990, in “Road Opening History” file, Roads files, DENA; NPS, “Newsletter #1, DENA,” January 1990, 3; “Newsletter #3,” May 1990, 1-2; “Newsletter #4,” June 1990, 1; Joe Van Horn, review comment, March 28, 2007.
- ¹⁸⁴ *Anchorage Daily News*, September 11, 1992, B-3; September 13, 1992, B-1, B-2; September 17, 1992, B-2; July 2, 1993, A-3.
- ¹⁸⁵ NPS, *Draft GMP, DENA* (March 1985), 13; NPS, *Final GMP, DENA* (November 1986), 14.
- ¹⁸⁶ Tim Taylor to Ted Vinson email, March 27, 2003; Ted S. Vinson and David Lofgren, “Denali Park Access Road Icing Problems and Mitigation Options” (draft, Nov. 2002), pp. 3-6; Brad Ebel to Julie Wilkerson memo, October 21, 2002; various items in “Road Opening History” file; all in Roads files, DENA; SAR, 1978, 5; 1986, 4; Brad Ebel email, April 17, 2003 and August 28, 2006.
- ¹⁸⁷ Cummings to Col. T.R. Anderson, March 18, 1982, in Box 1, “Denali Park Road Issue” files, Bill Brown Collection, AKRO.
- ¹⁸⁸ Today in the “old park,” the NPS “has partial legislative jurisdiction because the State was afforded the right to tax persons and corporations and people residing in the old park have the right to vote in local elections. In all other respects, the Federal government has jurisdiction.” “Jurisdictional Compendium, Alaska Region,” ARO Ranger Division files.
- ¹⁸⁹ John E. Cook to Regional Solicitor, Alaska Region, January 7, 1983; Babson to Regional Director, NPS, February 7, 1983; Don Bauer, “Research Note,” April 12, 1983; all in Box 1, “Denali Park Road Issue” files, AKRO.
- ¹⁹⁰ Mark S. Hickey (DOT&PF Commissioner) to Stan Leaphart, April 29, 1988, in Steve Carwile files; ANILCA, Section 1110(b); *U.S. Statutes at Large* 94 (1980), 2465.
- ¹⁹¹ Bill Sherwonit, “Never Going Back,” 31; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 12, 1990, A-1, A-8.
- ¹⁹² *Anchorage Daily News*, June 14, 1990, D-1, D-3; June 15, 1990, C-3; June 16, 1990, B-1, B-3.
- ¹⁹³ *Anchorage Daily News*, June 17, 1990, A-6; *New York Times*, July 30, 1990, 9.
- ¹⁹⁴ *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 17, 1990, A-1, A-6; July 8, 1990, B-3.
- ¹⁹⁵ *Anchorage Daily Times*, June 17, 1990, A-1, A-7; “RV Park Planned Within Denali,” *National Parks* 64 (September/October 1990), 8.
- ¹⁹⁶ Steve Carwile interview, May 25, 2006 and July 25, 2007.
- ¹⁹⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, July 2, 1993, D-1; July 3, 1993, B-1, B-2.
- ¹⁹⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, July 5, 1993, A-1, A-8. By the July 4th weekend, the group had changed its name to the Alaska Reclamation Crew.
- ¹⁹⁹ *Anchorage Daily News*, April 2, 1994, A-1; “Minutes of the U.S. District Court, District of Alaska,” Case No. F93-072 and F93-073 (JKS), November 8, 1993, in Interior Department Solicitor’s Office files, Anchorage, A-12; “Struggle Continues Over Denali Roads,” *National Parks* 68 (May/June 1994), 10-11.
- ²⁰⁰ B.A. Campbell to Charles E. Cole, September 17, 1993, in DOT&PF, *Historical Analysis, McKinley Park Road Jurisdiction and Ownership*, September 13, 1993; Bruce M. Botelho to Bruce Babbitt, May 2, 1994; Botelho to Babbitt, May 5, 1994; all in Interior Department Solicitor’s Office files, Anchorage; “Road Warriors,” *Alaska* 60 (August 1994), 13.
- ²⁰¹ William E. Brown, *A History of the Denali-Mount McKinley Region, Alaska* (Santa Fe, NPS, 1991), 107-12.
- ²⁰² *Ibid.*, 207; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, October 15, 1936, 3; November 4, 1936, 5; December 30, 1936, 12; March 2, 1937, 7; March 9, 1937, 4.
- ²⁰³ *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, March 24, 1961, 3; May 27, 1961, 3; June 20, 1961, 1; August 19, 1963, 4; Eugene Therriault, *A Road to Stampede* (Fairbanks, State of Alaska, Northern Region, Department of Transportation, 1989), 8-13, Item 869, DENA RML.
- ²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 209-10; Bill Brown to author, email, November 21, 2005. Celia Hunter, in a *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* editorial (March 3, 1988, p. 4), stated that Pilgrim “used up the entire pioneer access road appropriation for one year” to construct this route.
- ²⁰⁵ *Anchorage Daily Times*, May 10, 1972, 9; John Reynolds (Team Captain, Team 2) to Project Leader, Alaska Task Force, April 26, 1973, in Alaska Planning Group, *Final Environmental Statement, Proposed Mount McKinley National Park Additions, Alaska*, 35, 37, 127-28.

- ²⁰⁶ *Anchorage Daily Times*, May 28, 1982, D-6; May 30, 1982, E-5. HJR 65, in *Alaska House Bill History, 1981-1982*, p. 513; SJR 53, in *Alaska Senate Bill History, 1981-1982*, p. 1053. The signed resolution became Legislative Resolve 16 in the 12th Alaska Legislature.
- ²⁰⁷ *Anchorage Daily Times*, November 22, 1984, A-12; NPS, *Draft GMP* (March 1985), 25; NPS, *Final GMP* (November 1986), v, 31-32.
- ²⁰⁸ *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, March 3, 1988, 4; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 13, 1989, I-7; *Alaska Senate Bill History, 1989-1990*, 107.
- ²⁰⁹ *United States Statutes at Large* 14 (July 26, 1866), 251-53; *Revised Statutes of the United States*, second edition (Washington, GPO, 1878), 453.
- ²¹⁰ Michael Milstein, "Roads to Ruin," *National Parks* 67 (September/October 1993), 29-33; NPS, *Final GMP, DENA* (November 1986), v, 31-32, 185-88; SAR, DENA, 1990, 1.
- ²¹¹ *Anchorage Daily News*, August 26, 1991, D-1.
- ²¹² *Anchorage Daily News*, February 25, 1992, B-2.
- ²¹³ *Anchorage Daily News*, June 4, 1995, B-1.
- ²¹⁴ SAR, DENA, 1990, 1; Russell Berry to James Parham [etc.], November 21, 1990, in "Northern Access, 1981-1994" file, DENA Admin History Collection; NPS, *Denali Access Task Force Report*, November 1991, 7, at ARLIS. The final three members were Don Castleberry (head of the Midwest Regional Office) and two Denver Service Center transportation planners, Jim Straughan and Elmer Hernandez.
- ²¹⁵ NPS, *Denali Access Task Force Report*, 8, 21, 25; *Anchorage Daily News*, February 25, 1992, B-1, B-2; February 29, 1992, B-6; "NPS Report Supports Present Access at Denali," *National Parks* 66 (May/June 1992), 20; David Hulen, "Denali Hits Roadblock," *Alaska Magazine* 58 (July 1992), 7.
- ²¹⁶ *Anchorage Daily News*, February 25, 1992, B-2.
- ²¹⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, July 19, 1993, A-5; January 24, 1994, A-1, A-8; "Opening Up Alaska's Interior," *Alaska* 59 (August 1993), 12; SAR, 1993, 2; "Struggle Continues Over Denali Roads," 11; "Parks Highway to McGrath, 1993 Field Investigation" (unpublished research notebook), Carwile files.
- ²¹⁸ *Alaska Senate Bill History, 1991-1992*, 253; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, August 23, 1991, 1.
- ²¹⁹ Alaska Legislature web page, "Bills and Resolutions" link for 17th and 18th Alaska legislatures (<http://old-www.legis.state.ak.us>); *Alaska House Bill History, 1993-1994*, for HJR 28 (p. 316).
- ²²⁰ *Anchorage Daily News*, August 17, 1993, A-8. The Babbitt-Hickel trip down the park road took place on August 16. Supt. Russ Berry, who accompanied the two men, told Hickel that a recent consultant's report had concluded that a railroad to Kantishna would cost an estimated \$750 million. Hickel, however, was unmoved; he felt that a the proposed rail line was "a necessity."
- ²²¹ Alaska Legislature web page, "Bills and Resolutions" link for 17th and 18th Alaska legislatures (<http://old-www.legis.state.ak.us>); *Alaska House Bill History, 1993-1994*, 316. The signed resolution was Legislative Resolve 19 for the 18th Alaska Legislature.
- ²²² Public Law 102-240 (December 18, 1991), Sec. 1050; *U.S. Statutes at Large* 105 (1991), pp. 2000-01.
- ²²³ NPS, *Alternative Transportation Modes, Feasibility Study, Vol. II: Executive Summary* (Denver, Denver Service Center, May 1994), ES-1, ES-14 through ES-16.
- ²²⁴ Denali Task Force, *Denali Task Force Report; Findings and Recommendations for the National Park Service Advisory Board*, October 25, 1994, 7-8, Report 184/D-221, TIC Collection. The task force gave the advisory board an interim progress report at its mid-August meeting, and the board formally adopted the task force report at its December 14 meeting. *Federal Register* 59 (August 1, 1994), 38986-87, and *Federal Register* 59 (December 1, 1994), 61636.
- ²²⁵ See *Anchorage Times*, August 17, 1980, E-8.
- ²²⁶ NPS, *Draft GMP, DENA*, 16; NPS, *Final GMP, DENA*, 18.
- ²²⁷ SAR, 1983, 2; 1985, 2; NPS, *Draft GMP*, 15; NPS, *Final GMP*, 17.
- ²²⁸ SAR, 1987, 3; 1988, 1; 1989, 2; 1990, 2.
- ²²⁹ U.S. Department of the Interior, *Budget Justifications: National Park Service*, annual issues, 1980 to 1995. A full-time equivalent, or FTE, is a composite number that accounts for the total labor force. If a park, for example, has 4 full-time employees plus 4 other employees that work a 3-month season, the park therefore has 5 FTEs. People hired under "local hire" provisions are exempt from the FTE ceiling.
- ²³⁰ Ralph Tingey interview, May 16, 2006.
- ²³¹ Jane Bryant email, January 18, 2007.
- ²³² NPS, *Historic Listing of National Park Service Officials*, May 1991, 90, 176, 186; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, October 26, 1994, B-2.
- ²³³ Ralph Tingey interview, May 16, 2006; Robert C. Cunningham interview, October 13, 2004; Russell Berry interview, June 18, 2004; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 8, 1992, B-2.
- ²³⁴ *Anchorage Times*, August 23, 1981, B-4; August 24, 1981, A-6; October 3, 1981, B-8; May 19, 1983, A-10; July 11, 1983, A-6.

- ²³⁵ NPS, *Supplement to Interim DCP, Headquarters/Hotel Area, February 1981*, 12; NPS, *Environmental Assessment, DCP, Park Road Corridor*, March 1982, 51-52; NPS, *DCP, DENA Park Road Corridor*, February 1983, 50.
- ²³⁶ Stroud, *History of the Concession*, 35-36; SAR, 1984, 1.
- ²³⁷ NPS, *Revised Draft GMP*, December 1985, 17; NPS, *Final GMP*, November 1986, iv-v, 17.
- ²³⁸ SAR, 1985, 1; SAR, 1986, 1.
- ²³⁹ NPS, *DENA, Addendum to the 1983 Development Concept Plan / Environmental Assessment for the Park Road Corridor* (Denver, the author, June 1987), 1, 5, 11; NPS, *Riley Creek Proposal and Finding of No Significant Impact* (pamphlet), March 1988; SAR, 1987, 4. The idea of a new visitor center—which would be just a mile away from the visitor access center that was just getting underway near Riley Creek Campground—was discussed by NPS officials in the August 12, 1987 *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, p. 2.
- ²⁴⁰ SAR, 1988, 3; 1989, 2; Brad Richie interview, June 8, 2006. GDM's initial plans called for the construction of a new hotel on the same site as the existing hotel, thus minimizing the footprint of hotel development on the surrounding landscape. But in a December 1989 work session, the NPS changed course and decided to keep the old hotel open during the construction of a new hotel; this increased the impacted area from 7 acres to 10.2 acres.
- ²⁴¹ Miscellaneous notes and correspondence, in "Denali Hotel" folder, Steve Carwile files.
- ²⁴² John M. Morehead to Jack O'Neale, August 29, 1991, in "Denali Hotel" folder, Steve Carwile files.
- ²⁴³ NPS, *Amendment to the 1983 Development Concept Plan/Environmental Assessment for the Park Road Corridor and 1987 Addendum, Riley Creek, DENA* (Denver?, the author, March 1992), 5-13; John M. Moorhead, "Finding of No Significant Impact, Construction of Hotel and Other Visitor Related Facilities...", July 1, 1992, Steve Carwile files.
- ²⁴⁴ John M. Morehead to Assistant Inspector General for Audits, Interior, May 6, 1992, in "Denali Hotel" folder, Steve Carwile files; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 8, 1992, B-1, B-2; *Anchorage Daily News*, October 2, 1992, B-1; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, December 6, 1992, B-5; "Plans Scuttled for New Denali Hotel," *Alaska* 59 (February 1993), 12.
- ²⁴⁵ *Anchorage Daily News*, December 5, 1985, A-1; February 28, 1986, B-1; NPS, *Final GMP*, November 1986, 21-22; Alaska Department of Natural Resources and National Park Service, *South Denali; A Concept Proposal for Developing a Major Visitor Destination in Denali State Park on the South Side of the Alaska Range*, 1986.
- ²⁴⁶ SAR, 1986, 1.
- ²⁴⁷ SAR, 1987, 4; *Anchorage Daily News*, June 11, 1987, D-1.
- ²⁴⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, June 27, 1986, B-1; July 23, 1988, B-1; SAR, 1988, 1; *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, March 3, 1988, 4. In January 1988, several members of both the Alaska House and Alaska Senate sponsored resolutions (HJR 49 and SJR 49, respectively) throwing legislative support behind "joint state, federal, and private participation in the cooperative planning and development of a South Denali visitors' complex." The House resolution, more successful than its Senate counterpart, handily passed the full House on March 17, but it quietly died in the State Senate. *Alaska House Bill History, 1987-1988*, 318; *Alaska Senate Bill History, 1987-1988*, 289.
- ²⁴⁹ The master plan, released in mid-June 1989, called for the hotel, a 20-room wilderness lodge in the Tokositna area, and a road from the hotel to nearby Eldridge Glacier. *Anchorage Daily News*, September 16, 1988, B-1; September 29, 1988, B-6; March 1, 1989, A-1; March 21, 1989, B-1; Alaska Department of Natural Resources, *Denali State Park Master Plan*, 1989.
- ²⁵⁰ *Anchorage Daily News*, November 14, 1989, B-6; December 3, 1989, H-2; January 30, 1990, D-1, D-3; February 23, 1990, A-1; February 7, 1991, A-1; SAR, 1989, p. 2 and Addendum, p. 1; Jonathan Waterman, "Stealing Denali's Crown Jewels," *Backpacker* 18 (April 1990), 14.
- ²⁵¹ *Federal Register* 54 (October 11, 1989), 41691-92.
- ²⁵² SAR, 1990, 2.
- ²⁵³ Park planners selected the site, in part, because Section 1306 of ANILCA noted that "to the extent practicable and desirable, the [Interior] Secretary shall attempt to locate such [administrative] sites and [visitor] facilities on Native lands in the vicinity of the [park] unit."
- ²⁵⁴ *Federal Register* 56 (April 18, 1991), 15931; NPS, *Draft Development Concept Plan, Environmental Impact Statement, South Slope, DENA* (Denver, the author, May 1993), 10; *Anchorage Daily News*, August 9, 1991, A-1, A-12.
- ²⁵⁵ NPS, *Alternatives Workbook for the South Slope Development Concept Plan, DENA, Winter 1992* (the author, Denver Service Center, February 1992), 1-12.
- ²⁵⁶ *Anchorage Daily News*, January 14, 1992, B-6.
- ²⁵⁷ *Anchorage Daily News*, March 5, 1992, B-3.
- ²⁵⁸ *Anchorage Daily News*, March 25, 1992, B-2.

²⁵⁹ *Federal Register* 58 (July 8, 1993), 36699-700; *Federal Register* 58 (October 18, 1993), 53746; NPS, *Draft Development Concept Plan, South Slope* (May 1993), 18-21, 33, 35, 40, 43, 50-51; *Anchorage Daily News*, September 15, 1993, E-1; September 28, 1993, E-1.

²⁶⁰ Mike Tranel interview, October 25, 2006.

²⁶¹ Roger G. Kennedy to Roger L. Williams (NPS Advisory Board), March 18, 1994, in "Correspondence, 75-on" folder (DENA), WASO History Office Collection.

²⁶² SAR, 1995, 1; Denali Task Force, *Denali Task Force Report*, October 25, 1994, 6-8; *Federal Register* 60 (October 25, 1995), 54705.