

EXTERNAL CONDITIONS AFFECTING LAND PROTECTION

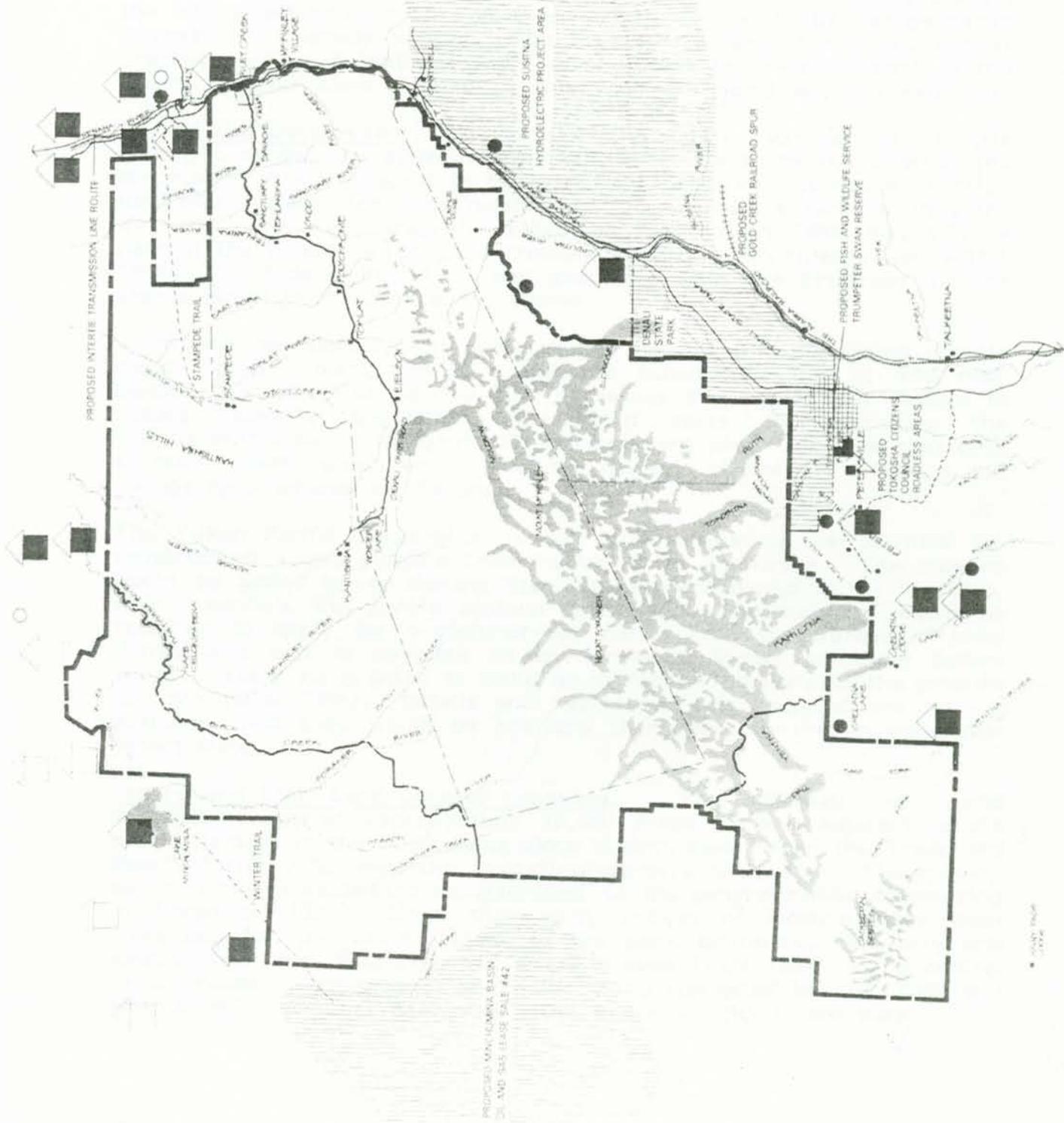
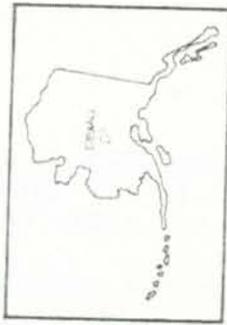
The National Park Service may not acquire interests in land outside the unit with two exceptions: Section 103(b) of ANILCA provides for minor boundary adjustments up to 23,000 acres, and section 1302(i) allows for the acquisition of contiguous state lands through exchange or donation. Protection of resources and the visitor experience can be affected by adjacent land uses in a positive way, if the uses are compatible with the purpose of the park, or in a negative way if they are incompatible.

Activities occurring outside the park and preserve boundary which could affect resource protection and visitor use include mining, oil and gas exploration and development, state and federal land disposal and subsequent future development, transportation development, the construction of the Susitna hydroelectric project and related utilities, and future activities on adjacent native lands. None of the potential problems identified in this section are expected to seriously affect park resources in the next two years, which is the time frame for land protection recommendations. Appropriate responses to external influences will be determined if potential problems materialize, and the "Land Protection Plan" will be revised every two years to reflect new management needs and priorities.

The National Park Service will continue to monitor activities in areas adjacent to the park, to identify factors that might have harmful effects on the park. Park managers will work with state and borough planning teams and private individuals to recommend actions that would avoid or mitigate impacts on park resources.

Mining. Metallic, coal, and limestone deposits and potential oil and gas reserves lie outside the park and preserve. The Usibelli Mine, operated by the Usibelli Coal Company, is the only active coal mine in the vicinity of the park. It currently is the site of extensive surface mining activity (Plangraphics 1983). The coal is transported by railroad to Fairbanks and Seward. According to the Alaska Division of Mining, a three- to four-fold increase in coal mining over the next 10 to 15 years will likely result from sales to Pacific Rim countries. Park managers foresee no significant impacts.

Numerous gold mining claims exist in the Yentna mining district (see the Regional Influences map). The rising price of gold in the late 1970s resulted in extensive new claim staking, primarily along Cache Creek, upper Peters Creek, and the Kahiltna River, and at Mount Fairview. Placer mining in this area is not expected to increase substantially over the next 20 years, but access will be improved (ADNR 1984). The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is requesting priority consideration for construction of an all-weather road across the mining district to the Fairview mountain group in addition to reconstruction of the Petersville Road. Improved access would serve mining, private land development, recreation, sport hunting, and fishing, and it would potentially offer alternative access to the national park for backcountry use. The Petersville Road vicinity supports the most intense hunting activity in the



- STATE LAND PROPOSED FOR SETTLEMENT
- STATE LAND DESIGNATED FOR MINING
- EXISTING MINING
- MINICHUMNA LAND SETTLEMENT AREA

REGIONAL INFLUENCES

State: Interior Policy and Planning
 United States Department of the Interior
 National Park Service

10/2008
 10/11/08

PROPOSED MINICHUMNA BASIN
 DE AND 545 LEASE SALE #42

POINT TRAIL
 10/11/08

area, and increased access by sport hunters might necessitate additional monitoring during the hunting season to ensure that no sport hunting occurred within the national park boundary.

Mining claims in the Chulitna mining district are concentrated primarily in the Dunkle Hills area (inside the park boundary) and from the Golden Zone Mine on adjoining lands southwesterly for several miles to the Eldridge Glacier. The Golden Zone Mine has been productive in the past and currently is being reactivated to the extent of improving access along the four-wheel-drive road that connects the area with the George Parks Highway at Colorado Station. The road is not open for public use at present, but it potentially could offer access for recreationists in the future. Other claim groups in this area are being actively explored.

Oil and Gas Development. As part of the state's five-year oil and gas leasing program, the state proposed the lease sale of 960,000 acres in the Minchumina Basin adjacent to the park and preserve. A notice of delay has been issued for sale number 42 because of a lack of industry interest. The sale, originally scheduled for January 1984, may still be held in the future, although petroleum potential is considered low (ADNR 1984). No federal inland oil and gas lease sales are proposed for the area adjacent to the park and preserve.

If oil and gas development does occur, the following associated impacts could result: disruption of traditional subsistence use in and near Denali, disruption of natural fire processes and consequent damage to natural wildlife populations, increased costs for managing the Tanana-Minchumina interagency fire management plan, and new pressures to build roads, which would alter the lifestyle of present residents and change the character of the area.

The Yukon Pacific Corporation is currently evaluating the potential for constructing a gas pipeline from Fairbanks to Anchorage. The pipeline would be added to the Nenana River transportation and utility corridor, which parallels the park's eastern boundary. The company would be required to apply for a right-of-way permit from the Bureau of Land Management and to complete an environmental impact statement before approval could be granted to build along federal portions of the pipeline corridor (BLM 1984). Details and impacts of this proposal are not yet available, but they would be analyzed thoroughly in the environmental impact statement.

Federal and State Land Disposal Programs. The Bureau of Land Management opened approximately 10,000 acres of land adjacent to the park boundary in the Minchumina block to settlement under the Trade and Manufacturing Site, Homesite, and Headquarters Site Laws. The opening was to provide settlement opportunities for the general public commencing in December 1981. Since then many notices of location have been submitted for the block closest to the park boundary, but only one location has been field-examined and approved (BLM 1984). The central Yukon resource management plan, due to be completed in July 1985, will address this and other BLM land issues in the vicinity of the park.

As part of its land disposal program, the state of Alaska is subdividing parcels for land settlement. The "Susitna Area Plan" and the "Tanana Basin Plan," both in preparation by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources in cooperation with other agencies, will make recommendations for classifying state lands and develop policies and guidelines for these lands. At this point in the planning process, recommendations are being made to slow the pace of land sales. For example, in the Susitna area the current pace of disposing of 20,000 to 30,000 acres per year will be slowed to approximately 7,000 acres per year (ADNR 1984).

Generally the state lands adjacent to the park have been classified for the primary uses of recreation, habitat protection, and water resource protection, all of which are compatible with park purposes. Possible secondary uses of these lands include oil and gas development, which could potentially interfere with traditional subsistence uses or degrade natural values within the park. The state plans to dispose of several parcels within 6 miles of the park and preserve boundary; these lands are primarily along the George Parks Highway.

Additionally, the National Park Service remains concerned over the potential for strip development along the George Parks Highway, particularly in the vicinity of the Riley Creek entrance, and it supports the implementation of the recommendations in Scenic Resources along the Parks Highway as a means of avoiding this sort of visually intrusive development. The study recognizes the outstanding visual quality of the Riley Creek area and recommends that it remain free of development. Residential and commercial development will more appropriately remain concentrated in the McKinley Village area.

Alaska State Park System. The 1982 Southcentral Region Plan outlines recommendations for Denali State Park over the next 10 years. These include boundary adjustments, updating the management plan, completing the trail program and management plan development phases, staffing for visitor information services at Byers Lake, and reconsidering joint management agreements with the National Park Service. All of these recommendations are compatible with the land protection goals of the National Park Service.

The development of a major visitor activity center on state park lands, as proposed in the NPS plan for Denali National Park and Preserve, will constitute a major change in the management of Denali State Park. Future cooperative planning regarding this proposal is called for in a memorandum of understanding between the National Park Service and the Alaska Departments of Natural Resources and of Transportation and Public Facilities (see appendix E). Cooperation among all concerned agencies will help ensure that future development and use are fully compatible with the objectives for both the state and the national parks.

Recently Denali State Park was opened to hunting. The National Park Service will continue to work with the state to minimize the effects that hunting might have on increased recreational use as envisioned in the general management plan for Denali National Park and Preserve.

Transportation. A demand for access has accompanied the parceling of state land. Most subdivided parcels are either accessible by air or are close to existing roads. Future roads will be provided by the borough or by the Alaska Department of Transportation. Currently there are no plans for the borough to provide roads in the vicinity of the park other than in the Petersville area, as described in the mining section.

The potential for state road development is described in the draft "Interior Alaska Transportation Study" (ADOT 1983). One of the potential roads identified in the study would go from Healy to McGrath, with a possible spur road south into Kantishna along the Kantishna drainage. Another possible road corridor would follow the Stampede Trail beyond its current terminus to the Kantishna mining area. This latter road would be 75 miles long, cost approximately \$100 million to \$150 million to build, and provide access primarily for miners. At present, the Stampede Trail is passable by most vehicles for the first several miles, negotiable by four-wheel-drive vehicles for several additional miles, then deteriorates into a tractor trail. There are no current plans to upgrade the trail. Further consideration of any roads into Kantishna should await Congress's decision regarding the status of the Kantishna Hills and would be subject to more detailed study and environmental compliance.

The state of Alaska has negotiated the transfer of the Alaska Railroad from the federal government to the state. As part of the transfer the secretary of transportation has conveyed to the Alaska Railroad Corporation, a public corporation of the state, an exclusive-use easement of not less than 200 feet along the railroad to be used for "railroad purposes" and also for "such other transportation, transmission, or communication purposes for which lands subject to such easement were utilized as of the date of enactment of this Act" (January 14, 1983, 45 USC 1203).

Utility Development. The Alaska Power Authority has submitted an 18-volume license application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the development of a major hydroelectric project on the Susitna River, southeast of the park and preserve. Briefly, the project entails constructing two dams, reservoirs, a permanent townsite, temporary camps, an access road from the Denali Highway, a railroad link from Gold Creek, and transmission lines to deliver power to the railbelt. Depending on the granting of the license, the preparation of an environmental impact statement, public hearings, and financing, the project is scheduled for construction beginning in 1987 and reaching a peak in 1990. A work force of 3,500 could be operating in the area by 1990, quadrupling the population of Cantwell and doubling the populations of small communities like Trapper Creek. Visitation to the national park and preserve might increase with the surge in nearby populations, even though recreational facilities would be provided within the dam construction area. Traffic along the George Parks Highway would increase and stimulate additional commercial development. Competition for fish, wildlife, and other resources would increase, and the rapid growth of Cantwell might affect the movements of the Denali, Nelchina, and Yanert caribou herds. Transmission lines would connect with the intertie utility lines currently

under construction, and the number of lines from Willow to Healy, which are visible from the park, would double.

The Alaska Power Authority has constructed an intertie transmission line between Willow and Healy that involves erecting 100-foot towers at 1,300-foot intervals along the route shown on the Regional Influences map. The lines and towers, which pass through the Yanert Valley, are partially visible from the national park entrance. This corridor will be the defined route for other future utility transmission from Anchorage to Fairbanks, and the National Park Service will continue to work with the Alaska Power Authority to mitigate the visual impacts of any future development along the Parks Highway and the park boundary.

Adjacent Native Lands. Doyon does not currently intend to develop the Telida tract of native land west of the preserve, and the corporation will promote subsistence use of the area. Further west on the Nikolai tract, studies have indicated, there is potential for developing coal for liquefaction. The future development of the coal deposits might influence transportation systems in the region.

Ahtna is developing a placer mining operation on Valdez Creek east of the park boundary, but otherwise it is not pursuing major developments in the vicinity of the park and preserve.

Cook Inlet Region does not intend to select lands in the vicinity of the park, at least not until native village selections have been made. At present, small native villages in this area are applying for group status to enable them to select lands. Potential uses of these lands if they were eventually selected would likely be limited to subsistence, but they could include mineral and commercial development.

SOCIOCULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

Denali National Park is primarily a natural area, and the sociocultural resources are directly linked to the natural features. Native and nonnative subsistence users in the areas added by ANILCA continue time-honored traditional hunting and trapping lifestyles. In many cases these people have trapping cabins or have applied for lands used in their ancestral hunting areas. These lands are for the most part in the northern additions near Lake Minchumina. Also included are three cemetery sites near these traditional lands.