PURPOSE OF THE PARK AND RESOURCES TO BE PROTECTED

SIGNIFICANCE AND PURPOSE OF THE PARK

Denali National Park and Preserve encompasses an internationally significant subarctic ecosystem that serves as a baseline for the study of comparable environments around the world. The original purposes in establishing the park in 1917 were to preserve wildlife, "natural curiosities," and "scenic beauties" for the benefit and enjoyment of the people. These purposes were reinforced by ANILCA when the park was enlarged in 1980. A more detailed description of the legislated purposes of the park is provided in appendix B.

RESOURCE DESCRIPTION

Denali is primarily a natural area known for its outstanding Alaskan wildlife and the highest mountain in North America. A detailed description of the park's resources is contained in the "Affected Environment" section of this document.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITIES

Passage of ANILCA provided a general framework for land protection for the newly established conservation units in Alaska. Section 1302 contains the general authorities for land acquisition (see appendix K). The secretary of the interior is authorized to acquire, by purchase, donation, exchange, or otherwise, any lands or interests in land within the park and preserve. However, any lands or interests in land owned by the state and local governments or by native village and regional corporations may be acquired only with the consent of the owners. In addition, lands owned by natives, allotted under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, who received title to the surface estate of lands from a village corporation as a primary place of residence, business, or subsistence campsite (section 14(c)(1)) or from the secretary of the interior as a primary place of residence (section 14(b)(5)) may be acquired only with the consent of the owner unless the secretary determines that the land is no longer being used for the purpose for which it was conveyed and that the use is or will be detrimental to the purposes of the preserve.

Native allotments or other private small tracts may be acquired without consent only after offering an exchange for other public lands of similar characteristics and like value and if the owner chooses not to accept the exchange. Exchanges are complicated by selections and past conveyances of lands within the state and by the lack of suitable substitute lands.

No improved property may be acquired without the consent of the owner unless the acquisition is necessary for the protection of resources or for protection of the values listed in ANILCA. When an owner of improved property consents to exchange lands or to sell to the United States, the

owner may retain a right of use and occupancy for noncommercial residential and recreational use by agreement with the National Park Service.

Section 1302(i)(1) and (2) of ANILCA authorizes the secretary of the interior to acquire, by donation or exchange, state-owned or validly selected lands that are contiguous to the park. Any lands so acquired will become part of the conservation unit without reference to the 23,000-acre restriction included in minor boundary adjustments as defined in section 103(b).

Section 103(c) states that only the public land within the boundaries of any conservation system unit is included as a portion of the unit. The state, native, and other private lands within the boundaries are not subject to regulations applicable solely to the federal lands. If conveyed to the federal government under the provisions cited above, such lands become part of the preserve and are subject to the federal regulations.

In addition to complying with the above legislative and administrative requirements, the National Park Service must administer the area as a unit of the national park system pursuant to the provisions of the act of August 25, 1916 (39 Stat. 535) as amended and supplemented, and in accordance with the provisions of title 16 of the United States Code, title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations, and other applicable laws. The National Park Service has jurisdiction over federally owned lands in the unit.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND VISITOR USE OBJECTIVES

The general management plan proposes to protect sensitive wildlife habitat on the north side of the Alaska Range by decreasing vehicle traffic. Increases in visitor use will be accommodated by increasing buses on the park road as private vehicles are reduced and studies confirm that such increases are permissible, and by opening up a second visitor service and activity center on the south side of Denali. Natural resources will be monitored, and activities found to have an adverse effect on resource values will be modified or eliminated. These proposals are described in more detail in the "General Management Plan" section of this document.

Specifically, the land protection objectives at Denali are to preserve and protect the park's natural and cultural values from the adverse effects of incompatible activities and to protect the visitor experience from intrusive development. Resources that are particularly susceptible to damage and therefore most in need of protection are wildlife habitat, water quality, scenic quality, and recreational value.