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## Alaska National Parks News Release

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### Katmai NP Considers Bridge Options at Brooks Camp

“Bear jams” could become a thing of the past at Katmai National Park as the National Park Service is considering alternatives to replace the floating bridge over the Brooks River.

The floating bridge connects the facilities at Brooks Camp with trails, bear viewing platforms, park operations buildings and a road leading to the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes. The bridge is installed annually in the spring, and is removed as the facilities are closed each September. The Brooks River area sees more than 12,000 visitors each summer, making it the most-visited part of the 4 million acre park in Southwest Alaska.

A draft environmental impact statement analyzing the access options is open for public comment through August 20, 2012.

Brown bears frequent the area of the bridge, which is at the outlet of the Brooks River at Naknek Lake. Bears often walk on the bridge, nap along the access trails, or catch salmon adjacent to the bridge – all of which can lead to “bear jams,” or temporary closures of the bridge and trails.

Each of four bridge replacement alternatives in the draft EIS seek to reduce the risk of human-bear conflicts, provide more dependable access across the river and make easier the eventual relocation of many of the Brooks Camp facilities to less problematic locations. Use of the bridge would be shared by a small number of utility vehicles.

The Park Service’s preferred alternative calls for a 350-foot bridge and about 1,200 feet of boardwalk. The bridge is anticipated to be at least 10 feet above the river. The boardwalk would include viewing areas and pullouts. The alternative also calls for the relocation of an existing barge landing about 2,000 feet south of its existing location, farther from the mouth of the river and away from high visitor and bear use areas.

Three other alternatives call for variations on the bridge/boardwalk and barge landing combinations. The no action alternative would leave the trails, floating bridge and barge landing in their current locations.

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The project is an outgrowth of a 1996 planning effort that resulted in a strategy to relocate the aging Brooks Camp facilities. The draft EIS also proposes changes to the earlier plan, including maintaining current float plane access locations instead of building a new landing/docking area.

Public comment on the draft EIS is being accepted through August 20, 2012. The document may be downloaded at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=24254> The website also allows comments to be sent electronically. Requests for paper copies of the document and comments may also be sent to Glen Yankus, NPS, 240 W. 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501.