

EAST FORK WOLVES GET A BREAK; WHAT'S NEXT?

DENALI WOLF NUMBERS REMAIN LOW; HUNTING ON ADJACENT STATE LANDS TO BEGIN AUGUST 10TH

by Nancy Bale

This spring, after three wolves from Denali's East Fork pack were killed by hunting/trapping activities on state lands north of the park, a number of organizations and individuals, in a barrage of emails and personal calls, urged the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to close the area to wolf hunting. This closure did in fact occur, on May 15th, two weeks before the end of the season. Representatives of ADF&G insisted that the closure was not done for a "conservation" reason, and that, at a "population level," Denali wolves are fine, simply experiencing natural cycling. Although the unprecedented decline in their numbers since 2010 and poor rebound between spring and fall numbers in 2014 gave us reason to suspect a conservation problem, at least among Game Management Unit 20C wolves, the Department was adamant that this remains an "allocation issue" only.

In a Press Release accompanying the Emergency Closure ADF&G stated that the presence of "more hunters in the field in May," because of recently-established (bear) bait stations, "... increases the chances of wolves commonly seen in the park to be taken as they venture on to adjacent lands. This temporary closure will prevent additional take of wolves this May so the Department and the Board can consider the new information."

As of this newsletter, exactly when and how the Department and the Board of Game will "consider the new information" is unclear. It could be two years before a formal proposal can technically be considered for GMU 20C, and wolf hunting season will begin again on August 10, 2015. Two sets of packs have dens in the entrance area of the park and are vulnerable to hunting when they venture onto state lands. Data on viewability shows continued declines. Studies document that the loss of even one wolf can have serious ramifications for packs. Truly, all the information needed for the Board of Game to institute a new buffer is there. Is a two-year wait acceptable? What is the next step for DCC?

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DAMS NEAR DENALI: A DISCUSSION

Monday, July 27th, at 7 PM
Tonglen Lake Lodge

Meet with representatives of Northwest Power Services, which has been granted preliminary applications by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to study the feasibility of small hydroelectric dam projects on Carlo Creek, Bruskasna Creek and the Jack River.

*Bring your questions. Refreshments will be available.
Additional information: mail@denalicitizens.org*



See our fact sheet at <http://www.denalicitizens.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Local-hydro-proposals-flier1.pdf>

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THANK YOU, MEMBER/DONORS

We're grateful to our members for responding so generously to our spring membership drive. Your names are listed below - helping publish the newsletter, advertise events and alerts and support youth involvement in environmental activism. We also want to thank you for submitting comments and letters on behalf of Denali when agencies are making important decisions. ☞

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STARTING SUMMER WITH THE DCC ANNUAL MEETING

by Erica Watson

Every year, DCC kicks off our summer with the Annual Meeting, when members and the board of directors meet in person to share ideas, food, and company. This year's meeting was held on June 1st at the McKinley Community Center, and was attended by about 25 people.

The board decided to structure our conversation at the meeting around an activity we did as a board at our retreat last winter, where we attempted to answer, in a single concise sentence, the question, "So what?" about each of our current issues. Among board members, this generated nuanced conversations about our common motivations and differences in understanding. Groups of five or six people worked together to define what they felt were the key points relating to transportation in the park, natural gas pipeline proposals, hydro projects in the Denali area, Healy basin gas, Stampede land use, and wolves.

Due to recent wolf deaths and declines in population, wolves have been on many peoples' minds lately.

Most of our conversation about wolves focused on the divisive symbolism of the animals, and what they mean to different groups and individuals. David James, the Northern Region Supervisor for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, joined our discussion, and shared the state's perspective, which can often feel inaccessible and confusing. Speaking to questions about what might push state wildlife managers into more decisive action on behalf of wolves, James said that if visitation numbers to the Denali region went down due to a decrease in wolf viewing, the Board of Game would listen to the voices calling for action on behalf of wolf conservation.

Though many spoke to their frustration with what feels like a two-sided argument between equally divisive viewpoints, many folks expressed a strong desire for a more nuanced conversation about the future of wildlife in the Denali area. We're grateful that David James was able to join our conversation, and for all those who brought their knowledge, passion, and concern for our shared home to the Annual Meeting.



David James discusses strategies for approaching the Department of Fish and Game regarding wolf protection around Denali.

photo by Erica Watson



photo by Erica Watson

Thanks to all who brought the delicious snacks and libations, and for your active participation in the discussion. Thanks also to Nan Eagleson for lending her naturalist talents to the pre-meeting bird walk.

And thanks to our retiring Board Chair, Sarah Bartholow, pictured in the photo to the left, for your sharp and organized leadership during the meeting.

Sarah, we are going to miss your ability to keep meetings on task and time frame, and the many hours you put into organizing our teleconferences and retreat this past year. 

WHAT'S NEXT FOR DENALI WOLVES

continued from front page

Given the data on low numbers, poor viewability and regional vulnerability, more meaningful protection for Denali wolves is critical. Two strategies have emerged among the efforts to accomplish this, a buffer easement and the traditional Board of Game process. Details below.

Easement involving an agreement between Governor and Interior

Wildlife advocate Rick Steiner has long believed in the concept of a "buffer easement" The gist of this idea - federal and state leaders (Governor and Interior Secretary) would enter into an agreement wherein the state would receive some sort of federal asset in return for an easement on state lands around the park

where wolves could not be killed. Steiner recently organized a meeting with Governor Bill Walker, Lieutenant Governor Byron Mallott and ADF&G Commissioner Sam Cotten to discuss this concept. Attending the meeting were Steiner, representatives of NPCA and Alaska Wildlife Alliance, and several key wolf advocates. Although DCC did not have a representative at this meeting, we understand from those in attendance that the governor was very receptive. Much negotiation would have to occur between the state and feds before such a deal could happen, but meeting attendees expressed optimism. Steiner has notified NPS Regional Director Bert Frost of this concept and further meetings are expected. This strategy circumvents the Alaska Board of Game, which has instituted buffers in the past but has been unreceptive to them more recently. The DCC Board has told easement advocates that we are concerned about some of the implications of this strategy, although we are glad that the governor was sympathetic to wolf protection near Denali.



Cover of fact sheet by National Park Service describing NPS' 2010 buffer proposal. Find at <http://www.nps.gov/dena/learn/nature/upload/wolfbuffer2010.pdf>
photo by Kes Woodward

A Proposal to the Board of Game in 2016, using an Agenda Change Request (ACR)

The efforts of wolf advocates to establish *areas where wolves are not hunted or trapped* have traditionally used the Board of Game process, which involves the introduction and acceptance of a proposal, public comment and testimony, and then a vote at an official Board of Game meeting for that Region of the state. The Denali area is in Region III. Despite the fact that the Board of Game has recently been unreceptive to such proposals, to the point of instituting a six-year moratorium in 2010, we feel the time is now right to use the Board process. In fact, DCC has already, in cooperation with the Alaska Wildlife Alliance, prepared a Proposal for a closed area adjacent to Denali. The only catch is that the Region III meeting was bumped from 2016 to 2017 by recent changes in Board of Game process.

We are reluctant to wait that long for a proposal to be heard, and so we've filed an Agenda Change Request (ACR) with the Board of Game, which would enable the proposal to be heard at the Board's 2016 meeting. ACRs are not often granted, but we have received some encouragement from Fish and Game representatives that this course of action is justified. Our ACR argument states that the Board of Game, after a moratorium of six years, had agreed to hear no wolf-take proposals in 2016, and that the Board had an obligation to hear such proposals in 2016, Region III meeting or not.

This ACR will be considered at a Board of Game teleconference on August 7, 2015. Look for an alert soon on how to comment in support. For details on the meeting, check the Board of Game website at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=gameboard.meetinginfo&date=08-07-2015&meeting=tele>

What you can do now

Neither one of the above strategies is likely to provide enhanced protection for Denali wolves by the August 10th start of wolf hunting season. Wolves who den in the entrance area, and even as far west as the Toklat River, remain vulnerable when they take forays onto state lands. **Question the re-opening of hunting season** - write to the Alaska Director of Wildlife Conservation, bruce.dale@alaska.gov, or the ADF&G Commissioner, sam.cotten@alaska.gov. Copy your note to the Governor, bill.walker@alaska.gov and the Denali Superintendent, don_striker@alaska.gov. ☞

BUSES AND WILDLIFE - SOME RESPONSES

In a recent issue of DCC News, we published a letter to Superintendent Striker by long-time visitor and advocate Charlie Bird about an experience he had observing the behavior of buses around bears near Sable Pass. The letter can be read online at our website. Click on the link for the March-April DCC News. In the letter, Charlie described an incident he observed, during which buses clustered around a sow and cubs and seemed to get too close as they maneuvered. Charlie asked Striker for a new vision for the Park Road. We invited comment on the letter, and are providing three perspectives about the piece, below. They all come from long-term advocates, the first two experienced park road drivers. Every commenter on these pages was once a DCC Board member and cares about Denali wildlife and about maintaining the unique character of the park road. All of them have participated in public process when matters of road use and design were at issue, including advocating for limits on road traffic in the NPS 1997 Entrance Area and Road Corridor Plan and the more recently completed Vehicle Management Plan. All responses were collected through email. Feel free to continue the discussion on email by writing to us at mail@denalicitizens.org. Photos by Kim Turnbull.

FROM BRUCE LEE

I just want to write a note to Nancy and the Board saying I was greatly disappointed and concerned about the article in the latest DCC newsletter about the buses on the Park road and one person's perspective on wildlife impacts. The letter showed a great deal of misunderstanding of the way the Park Service and the Denali Park bus drivers have come up with ways to lessen the traffic impacts on wildlife along the Park road, yet share the Park and it's impressive wildlife with the Park visitors.

The reference to "leap frogging" mentioned in the article has been shown to be an effective tool to accomplish both a lessening of impact on wildlife and sharing the viewing with the Park's visitors.

The whole article made it sound like there was little concern for the wildlife by the bus drivers on the Park road when in fact one of the loudest and strongest voices for Park preservation, protection of wildlife, and road traffic limits has come from the Denali Park drivers.

I am greatly disappointed and disheartened that DCC would publish such a one-sided perspective from a person who in fact is out on the Park road in a private vehicle. What would have been the impact on the bears mentioned in their letter if all the people enjoying the Park in those two or three buses had all been in private cars? When I was on the DCC board I was actively involved with getting a limit on the number of vehicles on the Park road and would have never supported an article like this being published without some fact checking and a broader discussion on issues and understanding what is being done in the Park to mitigate wildlife impacts. I wouldn't have been surprised if something like this was published in some other publication but not DCC, when you have access to so many people who work and live at the Park and have a deep knowledge of the issues, concerns and tools being used to preserve wildlife along the Park road. Sounds more to me like a rant from one person who doesn't have to make the hard decisions and is just pissed off at the buses' being there spoiling his time in his private vehicle.



FROM DAVID LAUGHTON

Thanks for asking for my comments...hmmm...well, these incidents are not unusual. The sow and cubs in question (we all know them well) are highly habituated and generally couldn't care less about buses. One foot (away from the animal) is extreme, but not unknown. Charlie makes no reference to the reaction of the sow or her cubs. My guess, is they did not respond much. I guess one could say that is a testament to the success of the bus system. These things should not happen, but I fear Charlie (Bird) is over-reacting. There ARE too many buses, but this incident is probably not useful in limiting their numbers.

FROM CHARLIE LOEB

I agree that the bus pattern he observed around wildlife close to the road happens somewhat commonly. I agree that incidents like he observed demonstrate that the road is already overcrowded, though I don't believe the bus driver who crept by next to the bears violated any NPS rule (in fact, I think drivers are rather encouraged to do what it takes to stay on schedule). I'm just not sure what you do with all that, and his letter doesn't seem to articulate a clear vision for exactly what he wants NPS to do. What "shovel-ready" solution is he thinking about? Although we weren't happy with the way the recently finalized Vehicle Management Plan came out, NPS did spend a lot of time researching and thinking about it, even brainstorming some real alternatives.

The real problem is that too many people are showing up to travel a rustic gravel road past the relatively few roadside animals who have fully adapted to the traffic. There are only so many ways of dealing with that, amounting to spreading out the traffic efficiently and limiting volume. Upgrades to the road conflict with other values, the wilderness designations prohibit development of completely different modes of travel (thankfully), and consultants looked for other vehicles that could travel the road and couldn't find better than what is presently being used saving only the design of a custom bus (my personal favorite, but no one seems interested in pursuing it).



We hope the traffic model designed in the Vehicle Management Plan will help address the ideal "spread" of traffic on the road, but the overall volume remains an issue. The 1997 strategy was to keep the volume capped and provide other opportunities to experience Denali in the entrance area and south side. Unfortunately the 2012 solution was to make the cap more flexible (though at least we got some fixed albeit expanded limits).

I do think that not everyone who travels the park road really wants to be there. An untapped opportunity for reducing volume is to reduce demand. Work with the travel industry to better sort those who really don't want to travel a gravel road for 6 hours and find a meaningful way for them to experience Denali. We have never moved past the idea that the only way to visit Denali is to take a bus. I think the vision of the 1997 planning efforts was to change that; to make it possible for a visitor to say they had seen the park without ever getting on a bus. That vision has never been realized.



LNG PROJECT CLEARS HURDLES, PREPARES FOR NEXT PHASES

PROJECT WOULD BRING NORTH SLOPE GAS VIA PIPELINE THROUGH DENALI BOROUGH TO TIDEWATER

by Hannah Ragland

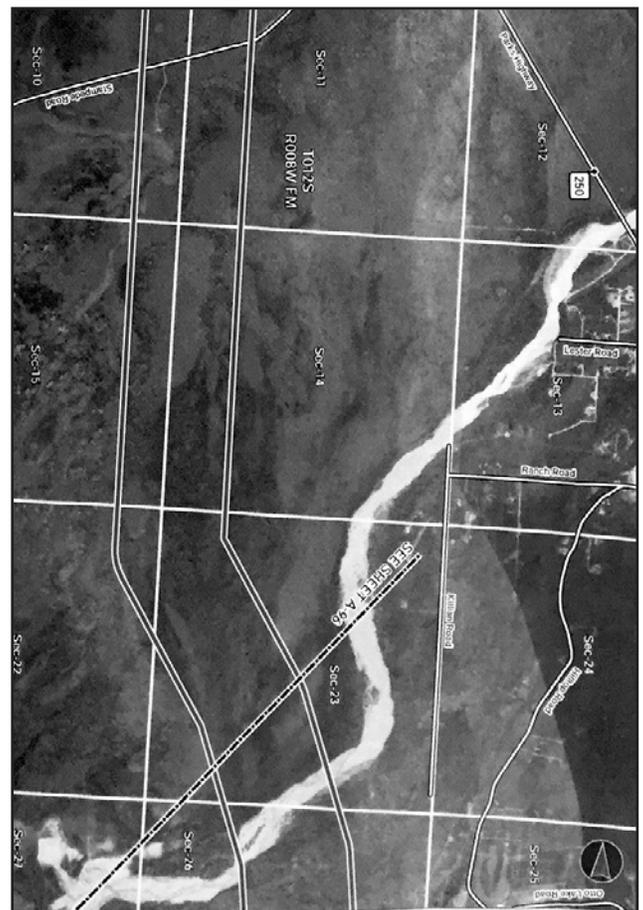
The LNG project, which would bring liquefied natural gas from Alaska's North Slope to tidewater, received a boost from the Alaska State legislature this past spring, and has overtaken the Alaska Stand Alone Pipeline (ASAP) Project. It boasts the support of the state, TransCanada pipeline corporation, and the "big three" oil and gas corporations (BP, Conoco Phillips and ExxonMobil). In late May, the US Department of Energy approved a conditional license that would allow the Alaska LNG project to export liquefied natural gas to countries which do not have a free trade agreement with the US. This follows the approval in November 2014 for export to countries that the US already has fair trade agreements with, and opens up the export market potential, making the project more economically lucrative for big business.

Despite these advances, the LNG Project has many more hurdles to clear, including right-of-way permitting and the environmental compliance documents and public process required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has taken the lead in NEPA compliance, which involves hosting formal scoping meetings and preparing the Environmental Impact Statement. Preliminary scoping is currently open for public comments on concerns regarding potential impacts of the project, and comments will be accepted until December 4, 2015. However, with over 4,000 pages of information to pore through, and no specific maps of areas identified for potential development, engaging in this part of the process is no simple matter.

Proponents insist this "isn't a pipeline project"

Proponents of the LNG Project, including BP, ConocoPhillips and ExxonMobil, visited the Denali Borough in early May to provide information on summer plans as they gear up for the next stage of the project. Meetings were scheduled in Anderson, Healy, McKinley Village and Cantwell. Attendees of the LNG presentations were somewhat perplexed to hear that the "big three" oil companies insist that this "isn't a pipeline project." Instead, the project is being framed as a "natural gas project." For Denali residents, the suggestion that this isn't a pipeline project fell on deaf ears. While this may be a public relations spin, it did little for local residents who are looking at the massive right-of-way that travels through the community, traversing private property and residential areas. The scope of the project is certainly larger than a pipeline, which also includes a gas treatment plant near Prudhoe Bay, along with a gas liquefaction facility, storage, and export terminal in Nikiski. However, local concerns center on the portion of the 800+ mile pipeline right-of-way traveling through the Denali Borough, and impacts from this right-of-way during construction and for the life of the project.

Private property rights are one of many concerns, as well as safety, impacts related to industrial development on quality of life, and impacts in areas important for wildlife habitat and recreation. One local business owner, operating a guiding business in the Dry Creek Area, expressed concerns about access issues for those traveling west of residential areas around Killian and Lester Roads. The business owner pointed out that the pipeline's 150' wide construction swath would directly impact access during construction, and would have unforeseen impacts for the duration of pipeline operations. Construction activities involve road building and gravel extraction, which vastly expands the potential footprint of operations in the Denali Borough. For communities whose economy is so dependent on tourism, concerns such as these should not be ignored.



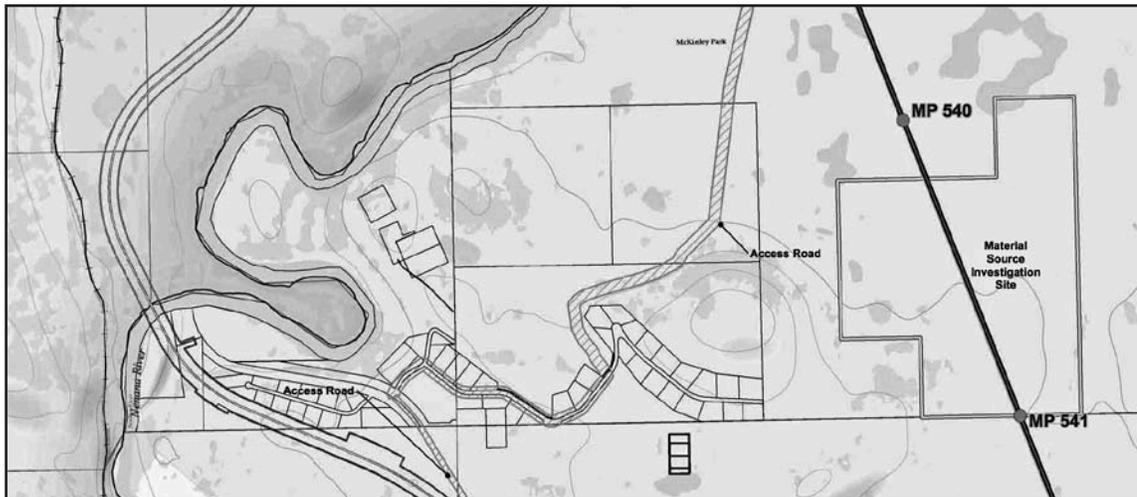
Photographs of draft maps presented at the Healy meeting show the pipeline alignment west of Killian Road in Healy. More photographs of the proposed right-of-way are available by contacting hannah@denalicitizens.org.

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LNG PIPELINE PROJECT CLEARS HURDLES, MOVES TO NEXT PHASES

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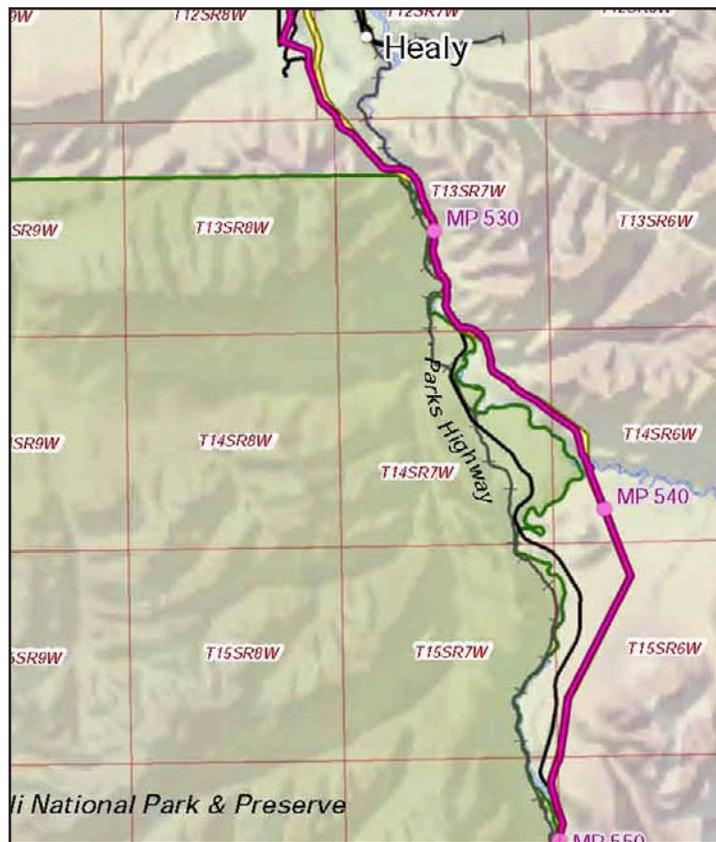
What’s particularly egregious is the fact that the Alaska Gasline Development Corporation (AGDC), an independent public corporation affiliated with both ASAP and Alaska LNG, refuses to share preliminary maps depicting the right-of-way route and locations of other proposed infrastructure (i.e. material sites, access roads, compressor stations), citing concern that citizens may be “confused” that the maps are only a draft. Attendees offered a simple solution: put the word “DRAFT” on the images. After being asked directly, presenters did share that there were tentative plans to have a 20-40 acre compressor station located between McKinley Village and Cantwell.



Material sites and access proposed for exploration by the Alaska Stand Alone Pipeline project east of McKinley Village are likely options that the LNG Project will explore, considering the similar draft right-of-way alignments. The project’s need for gravel alone will be massive.

Picking a pipeline route: Denali National Park or the Yanert Valley?

One of the more contentious issues involves the right-of-way alignment, and whether the route should avoid the National Park by traveling through the Yanert River valley and behind McKinley Village, or along the Parks Highway and through the park. Both the LNG and ASAP projects have proposed right-of-way alignments that would avoid traveling through the park, veering away from the Parks Highway toward the east. Senator Lisa Murkowski successfully introduced a bill that was passed in 2013 that would allow the Department of Interior to permit the pipeline to travel through Denali National Park. According to Murkowski, “This bill allows the decisions on the best route for a pipeline to be based on economic and commercial grounds, rather than out of concern about possible delays caused by trying to win access rights across federal lands.” It was suggested that this would allow for a better comparison of a Parks versus Richardson Highway comparison, although that appears to have been forgotten. Although presenters did not have information on alternatives for the right-of-way alignment, Brooke Merrell, a National Park Service Regional Environmental Coordinator attending the Healy meeting, shared that FERC has informed NPS that both a park route and bypass would be included as alternatives in upcoming Environmental Impact Statements. 



Map from Alaska Stand Alone Pipeline files, shows the currently-preferred gas pipeline route bypassing Denali National Park. Local citizens have wondered why a route through the national park, along the Parks Highway, has not been given more consideration, in view of multiple impacts from the bypass route.

DENALI BOROUGH BUSINESS:

WHAT'S OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT UP TO?

by Hannah Ragland

The Denali Borough government has been considering a number of important issues over the past few months. What follows is a brief summary of the highlights.

August meeting scheduled to revive planning for Borough land

After years of stagnation, the Denali Borough is taking steps to move forward on local land use planning by hiring an Alaskan planning firm, Agnew::Beck. The firm has worked with municipalities around the state in planning efforts, and will specifically be looking at chapters in Denali Borough code related to Borough-owned lands, including leasing and permits, and land-use classification. Various parcels have been conveyed to local municipality ownership, both remote and along the road system. Parcels include land between the Panguingue Subdivision and Parks Highway, and parcels around Karma Ridge. At 6 pm on Wednesday, August 5, Agnew::Beck will be participating in a joint work session with the Denali Borough Assembly and Planning Commission in Healy, at the Tri-Valley Community Center. DCC commends the Borough's choice to seek help in moving forward, and is looking forward to continued engagement in this process.

Talking Trash (and recycling?)

The Planning Commission has identified three possible locations for a transfer site in the Healy area. Currently, with the landfill located near Anderson and a transfer station in Cantwell, there are no local options, aside from a commercial operation, for residents to dump trash. Possible locations of a new transfer station include the gravel pit north of Panguingue Creek along the Parks Highway, a site off of Lignite Road, or a location just south of the Lignite-Stampede Road intersection along the highway. A survey is in the works to determine public opinions. Meanwhile, some thirty representatives from Subaru, the National Park Service, and the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) visited the landfill earlier this summer as part of a campaign to reduce waste near three national parks, including Denali. According to the Mayor's June report, the Healy landfill visit was to "look at our facility, recycling opportunities, and ways to extend the life of the landfill by working with local organizations to reduce waste." The group planned to also visit the Cantwell transfer station and recycling center. According to a NPCA press release in June, the initiative has a goal of "significantly reducing waste going into landfills from all national parks," and is part of celebrating the National Park Service Centennial.

Planning for pedestrian safety in the Healy area

In the summer of 2014, the Borough Assembly recognized the need for planning safe routes for pedestrians, and chose to begin planning efforts in Healy, in part because it is the most-populated area. An ad hoc committee was created to brainstorm options to improve safety and solicit public input on public priorities. After over 200 responses to an online survey, the committee is currently moving forward with a draft plan that will again go out for public input before finalization. Over half of the survey responses indicated that the intersection of the Parks Highway and Hilltop-Healy Spur Road was their biggest concern. The solution most supported was to "Install crosswalks and seasonal flashing lights (visible from north and southbound lanes) over Parks Highway at the intersection to warn of pedestrian crossing." Although the plan is not final, the Alaska Department of Transportation has been notified of the local concerns about the intersection, crosswalk delineations on side streets in town, and various sign priorities, including some speed limit adjustments. These priorities were forwarded for funding through the Highway Safety Improvement Program, and determination of funds will come this fall.

Moving Assembly meetings to Healy only

The Assembly has been contemplating setting Healy as the location for their monthly meetings, and is seeking public input. As is the case with most ordinances, it will be introduced in each of the four communities where meetings are held in a monthly rotation: Anderson, Healy, McKinley Village and Cantwell. This rotation has long been used to allow different communities an opportunity to easily provide comments in person. Assembly discussion has included the burden of members who travel between the northern- and southernmost communities and the dangers of traveling in inclement weather, although several members have expressed gratitude for the chance to visit, and get feedback from, the various locations. This is not the first time setting a single meeting location has been discussed, and several years ago there was some talk of investigating options to video-conference between sites. More recently there has been discussion of adding a second Healy meeting to the rotation to recognize the new Panguingue Creek/Ferry district, which is not currently represented in the rotation because there has not been an adequate site to meet. 

BRIEF NEWS AND VIEWS

RESULTS ON WOLF VIEWING STUDY PRESENTED IN FAIRBANKS AND DENALI

National Park Service biologist Bridget Borg presented the results of her 5-year examination of factors related to wolf viewing opportunities in Denali on June 29 at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. As part of a doctoral program, this dissertation provided an opportunity for Borg to work with both the National Park Service and Alaska Department of Fish and Game in looking at how factors such as wolf harvest at the northeastern boundary of the park impact wolf viewing opportunities along the Park Road. Her results suggest that the former closures on state lands northeast of the park did improve wolf-viewing opportunities, and did not reduce the overall number of wolves trapped or shot legally outside of the park. Through the project, Borg explored the process of structured decision-making and adaptive management options, which could provide a framework for cooperative state and federal wildlife management. She has been asked to present her findings to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game later this summer, and her full dissertation will be published in the next several months. She shared her study with the general public in presentations at the Denali Education Center and the Murie Science and Learning Center.

STATE DOCUMENTS STAMPEDE TRAIL DAMAGE, NO ACTION TO RESOLVE

Representatives from the Alaska Division of Mining, Land and Water (DMLW) attended the May Denali Borough Assembly meeting to discuss the state's role in "managing" lands along the Stampede Trail corridor. Their presentation described various authorizations west of the Panguingue Subdivision, including the Alaska Travel Adventures (ATA) Jeep tours along the Stampede Trail to a camp on Fish Creek since 2004. The Jeep tours are the only commercial summer trail guiding business required to have a land use permit, both because of their camp at Fish Creek, and because the state recognized in 2004, when the permit was applied for, that the Jeep tours could cause damage above what is generally allowed on state lands. The Argo and ATV tours that have operated along the trail (the latter were discontinued this summer) are not currently required to have a permit, and commercial use is supposed to remain on the trail. ATA's permit includes specific stipulations about trail deterioration, which the state has documented through photographs, particularly in the area known by some as the "moguls." Still, the state has made no firm commitment to address trail deterioration, but expressed interest in working with the local community to find a solution. There is reluctance to take on trail management, with the controversial Rex Trail closures being the only other example in the Interior where the state has stepped in to address damage. DCC will continue to investigate opportunities to address trail deterioration, and hopes a solution can be found sooner rather than later.

UNIV. OF N. ARIZONA OBSERVATORY DOING IMPORTANT CLIMATE CHANGE MODELING

On July 13th, Denali Resources and Science Team Leader Dave Schirokauer organized a field trip to the University of Northern Arizona permafrost observatory near Eightmile Lake, along the Stampede Road. Researchers chose the site because of the relatively rapid permafrost melting already detected there. They then created mini-environments enclosed by clear plastic panels, to further warm the air over the site, and, in winter, placed snow fencing that encouraged formation of drifts, increasing the warmth of the site. In this way, the researchers were able to mimic future warming events and to predict permafrost melt and carbon flux in a warming environment. The research team has been at this site for seven seasons and hopes to continue its project for several more. DCC board member Nancy Bale joined the field trip and found it very educational. In the photo, participants are watching the measurement of depth to permafrost, using a metal probe. Thank you for the opportunity, Dave. It was a beautiful day, good company, interesting learning, ripe cloudberries!



photo by Nancy Bale

DCC NEWS

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City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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If you have a different address in winter/summer, please include both addresses.
Make checks payable to Denali Citizens Council and send to the address below.
Members receive **DCC News** and other print material and email updates.