

## LNG PIPELINE – DCC QUESTIONS PARKS HIGHWAY ROUTE

### TOO MANY UNKNOWN AND TOO FEW BENEFITS MAKE THIS ROUTE DIFFICULT TO SUPPORT

by Nancy Bale

Since 2008, Denali Borough residents have heard various proposals for a pipeline that would transport North Slope gas to the Anchorage area using a Parks Highway route. Now, in 2015, the Alaska Liquefied Natural Gas Project, or Alaska LNG, has emerged as the dominant gas pipeline project for Alaska. Overshadowing its most recent competitor, the Alaska Standalone Pipeline Project (ASAP), Alaska LNG is expected to cost between \$45 and \$65 billion dollars, the single largest investment in Alaska history. The project, unlike ASAP, would employ up to a 48 inch diameter pipe, would transport pure methane, and would involve liquefaction of the gas and export to Asian markets from a marine terminal, currently identified as Nikiski, Alaska.



### FERC conducts scoping across the state: Docket No. PF14-21-000

In early November 2015 the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) conducted scoping sessions in affected communities along the proposed pipeline route. FERC is the federal agency responsible for conducting environmental review of energy projects, and has already been in the borough scoping on proposed small hydro projects. The deadline for scoping comments was December 4, 2015, a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is scheduled to appear in 2017, and a Final EIS is scheduled for 2018, followed by a determination of whether the project should proceed. FERC will not be in the community again for public comment until the Draft EIS is out in 2017. DCC intends to submit comments. We encourage others to submit, even if past the deadline.

The FERC scoping meeting in the Denali Borough attracted 25+ citizens. Brian Napier represented DCC and spoke to the effects of this project on scenic qualities, wildlife and the overall tourism economy, without a clear benefit to locals. Others raised issues of impacts upon high-value land parcels in the Panguingue, Yanert, Montana Creek, Otto Lake and north Nenana Canyon areas, including acreage owned by the Denali Borough and still awaiting classification and land use plans. The issue of access roads and their disruption of the community came up.

The FERC scoping meeting in Anchorage attracted 40+ individuals and fourteen gave testimony. I spoke for DCC, and questioned the Parks Highway route, citing its heavy impacts on lands in the Denali Borough designated for wildlife habitat and public recreation. I urged FERC to consider other viable alternatives to the Parks Highway route, including the Trans Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) route to Valdez. As it happened, a few other speakers favored this alternative route, with reasons focused on impacts to whales and problems with ice movement in Cook Inlet. Although a lot of momentum exists behind the Alaska LNG project as currently configured, FERC representatives at the meeting indicated that all viable alternatives would be considered, based on public input. It is time for folks to raise their voices suggesting an alternative routing of this pipeline.

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COME HAVE DINNER WITH THE DCC BOARD  
**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2015 6-9 PM**  
MCKINLEY COMMUNITY CENTER

We're having our Annual Board Retreat over the weekend of December 12-13th, and we want you to have dinner with us at the Community Center on Saturday evening, to celebrate the holidays and another year of community advocacy in the Denali Borough. We'll take some time to discuss issues of importance to you and share our plans for the next year. Please RSVP to [mail@denalicitizens.org](mailto:mail@denalicitizens.org). Non-members and kids welcome!

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# FROM THE BOARD

by Michael Raffaeli

I left Denali this fall for a few weeks to visit friends and family and found all of them wondering if I was ever returning south. They all wanted to know what I missed about the lower 48. Sure, there are the fresh vegetables in a year-round garden, an easier climate to live in, and swimming in granite pools of Sierra rivers. But I also found them mesmerized by the things that have kept me in Alaska and Denali - the intense winter, the immense quantity and quality of wild land, opportunities for solitude, the food that the land provides, sharing the land with animals like grizzly bears and wolves, and of course, the northern lights. As I headed back home to Alaska to what feels like winter beginning to settle in (at least I am hopeful that this is the case), I pondered a little more about what keeps me in Alaska. And really, those things that Denali Citizens Council stands for can sum up the reasons I stick around: the wildlife, the wilderness, and the way of life.



NPS Photo

It was a busy summer for DCC and it looks as if winter will continue to be so. Several big projects continue to take up our time, a few smaller ones continue to pop up, and then we are still keeping our eye on a few long-term issues. After the forum this summer on local hydropower projects, the community's attention has turned for the time being. The Agnew::Beck meetings regarding borough land management have seen quite a few DCC members sharing their thoughts, and the issue was front-stage recently in the community. Also in the forefront this fall was the trail scoping on potential plans from the NPS. And just as that scoping was completed, another scoping was released by the Park regarding a wayside at Mile 231 by Crabbie's Crossing on the Parks Highway. Scoping on the Alaska LNG pipeline recent-occurred, and DCC was there. We are trying to keep abreast of the latest news on wildlife as well. As the snow falls, temperatures drop and the light fades, this time of year is one reflection. We hope that which inspires all of us to care for the greater Denali area continues to burn brightly for you. 



Alaska Native Knowledge Network

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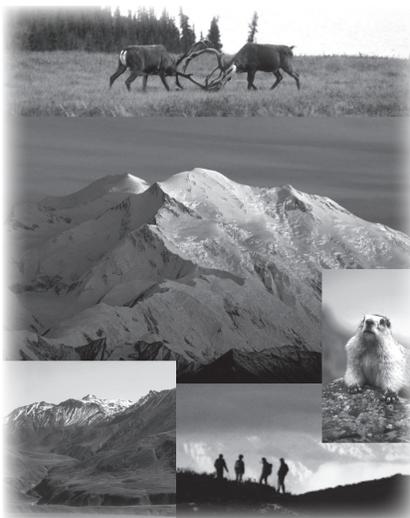
by Nancy Bale

Our fall membership drive is rolling along successfully, with local, state and outside donors represented. Many of our outside donors are part-year or former residents, whose fond recollections of this special place help to fuel our mission. New folks are joining too - based on a friend's recommendation, a Facebook posting, or a copy of the newsletter. We are hoping that our message continues to fill that special niche of information and advocacy that is unfilled by any other organization. We appreciate your feedback to our alerts and comments, and hope you will suggest areas where we can deepen the message or add new issues to our plate. 

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## CORRECTION

In late summer DCC News, our article "What's next for Denali wolves" stated that bear baiting season in the Wolf Townships will be from April 15-July 30, 2016. However, the correct season dates will be from April 15-June 30, 2016. This still brings bear hunters into the field at a time when wolves are vulnerable, and although the Department of Fish and Game identified this as a problem when it closed the Stampede area to wolf hunting early last year, no solution has been forthcoming. We've already corrected the season dates in our online newsletter.

# DCC CONTINUES ITS INVOLVEMENT IN BOROUGH PLANNING

## RECENT COMMENTS URGED CAREFUL PLANNING TO PROTECT LOCAL QUALITY OF LIFE

by Hannah Ragland

The Denali Citizens Council (DCC) recently submitted comments to the Denali Borough on the planning process and recommended land use designations for land transferred to the Borough by the State of Alaska. The process is being facilitated by the Anchorage-based land use planning firm, Agnew::Beck, and is a welcome step forward after years of discussion and debate about how to plan for and manage recently acquired land. Agnew::Beck has been contracted by the Denali Borough to provide a variety of recommendations including classification categories, broad descriptions that identify management intent and appropriate uses, and specific parcel recommendations for nearly 50,000 acres of land given to the Borough through the state's Municipal Land Entitlement (MLE) program.

The Borough first applied for their land selections in 1996. As the state worked on revising their land use plan for this region, amidst debate over what areas should remain in state hands for wildlife or public uses, the selection process spanned nearly two decades. Decisions made in 2009 and 2014 confirmed which land would be transferred to the Borough, and initiated work to develop land use plans at the Borough-level. DCC made several important suggestions during this MLE decision-making process. In our comments during the Agnew::Beck process, we expressed some concerns and uncertainty about the specific planning steps and decision matrix, and cautioned the Borough to move slowly in selling or leasing land without ample opportunity to consider each parcel specifically. Lands that are now in Borough ownership (or in the process of being transferred) include parcels around the Panguingue Subdivision, along Stampede and Lignite Roads, near McKinley Village, along the Denali Highway, and around Otto Lake, Slate Creek, Antler Creek, Montana Creek and the Wood River (a map of these lands appeared on the cover of the late summer DCC News).

### Finalizing classification categories and process should be a priority

Current code states that land must be classified before any action is taken that affects the land, and that management plans should be created for all parcels and be required before leasing. The Borough Planning Commission has spent several years and proposed upwards of ten draft lists discussing different options for classification categories, attempting to define what the process would look like. While we feel it is presumptive to classify a specific parcel without the full process and requirements solidified in code, we appreciate the opportunity to cogitate once again on the options for classification. We look forward to a resolution on this process and on the classification categories that are used.

In our comments DCC pointed out several redundancies in classification categories. We hope that our comments will influence future revisions to this draft. As recommended by Agnew::Beck, the Borough would retain land classified as *Amenity* or *Reserve*, while lands classified as *Multiple Use* and *Land Bank* were described as land that could be kept or disposed of depending on future management plans for specific parcels. As no lands are currently proposed for Reserve, we suggested deleting this category, and asked for more clarity on the difference between the *Multiple Use* and *Land Bank* categories.

### Specific parcels have unique needs

Although there still is not consensus over the fate of each individual parcel, the Denali Borough's efforts to engage Agnew::Beck to help us move forward is a move that we commend, as proposals for specific parcels provide an opportunity to comment on options, and get a sense of the Borough's vision for each parcel. We made a number of comments specific to different parcels, and have received a response from Agnew::Beck that they it be changing the classification recommendation for nearly 900 acres of green space adjacent to the Panguingue Subdivision to *Amenity*. The recommendation for the 4,280-acre parcel east and west of the Parks Highway along Stampede and Lignite Roads will now be *Land Bank*, until further research and public engagement can guide more specific alternatives. There is no word at this time on other changes, although a full report on public comments is anticipated soon.

Previous efforts to classify Borough land have focused on the Panguingue area, stirring concerns that land sales will impact nearby residential areas and wildlife corridors. These now defunct planning efforts had produced a variety of proposals, including an additional subdivision and possible commercial development along the Stampede Road. Meanwhile, proposals for commercial property near McKinley Village and adjacent to the seasonal commercial hub near the entrance to Denali National Park have raised concerns that commercial sprawl will take precedence over building opportunities for year-round businesses or residential areas, and will tax our already overburdened emergency services.

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## Continued public involvement is critical to guide planning process

This process is ongoing, and will be up for public comment at Planning Commission meetings held at the Tri-Valley Community Center on the third Tuesday of every month. We anticipate that additional public meetings will be hosted by Agnew::Beck. Before classifying specific parcels, residents should continue to encourage the Borough to finalize classification categories and the procedural requirements for classification, as well as guidelines for how permitting, leasing or sales will be determined. Over the years, public involvement has ebbed and flowed with specific proposals and controversy around specific parcels, followed by stagnation and starting the process anew. The Borough has spent much of its 25 years of existence working to obtain this land, and now sits without firm direction on how to plan or manage it. DCC applauds actions to move forward once again, and appreciates all of the citizen involvement over the years. We encourage our members to maintain a high level of involvement to see this process to completion, and urge local citizens to get involved.

To read DCC's full comments: <http://denalicitizens.org/2015/11/dcc-submits-comments-on-agnewbeck-recommendations/>. To read Agnew::Beck's full report and preliminary recommendations, or see maps of Borough-owned land ("Land Management" tab): <http://www.denaliborough.govoffice.com>. 

## LNG PIPELINE - DCC QUESTIONS PARKS HIGHWAY ROUTE

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### Unknowns make public comment difficult

One of the reasons I gave to FERC for opposing the Parks Highway route was the absence of useful detail on how project infrastructure will affect the lands and communities it crosses. Recent maps that showed possible access routes in the Denali Borough are no longer posted on the LNG website, and it is still unclear where gravel will be obtained and where the pipeline will be above vs. below ground. The overall visual impacts of laying pipe close to the Parks Highway in the Nenana Canyon have not been pictured. On one of the maps I reviewed, it looked as if an access road to the Yanert Valley portion of the line would be located on the BLM 17(b) easement that starts at a newly renovated pullout along the Parks Highway. I made it clear to LNG representatives that the conversion of this trail into a road for purposes of access to the pipeline would likely be opposed by the community.

Other project unknowns include whether the pipe will be 42" or 48" in diameter (not to be decided until May 2016), how large the footprint of a compressor station will be (two are envisioned, one north of Healy, the other north of Cantwell), whether the pipeline will be buried under or bridged over the Nenana River at Moody Bridge, what, if any, access roads are planned to that portion of the pipeline above the Nenana Canyon hotels, and how permanent any access roads would be in Yanert and Montana Creek areas. Also unknown at this time is how the pipeline senses a breach and provides notification of it, and what impacts from maintenance and general operations there would be. 



Is access to LNG pipeline being considered across the Ahtna 17(b) easement? *Photo by Nancy Bale*

### We urge you to submit written comments on Docket No. PF 14-21-000 - For how to, see below

- (1) You can file your comments electronically using the eComment feature located on the Commission's website ([www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov)) under the link to Documents and Filings. This is an easy method for interested persons to submit brief, text-only comments on a project;
- (2) You can file your comments electronically using the eFiling feature located on the Commission's website ([www.ferc.gov](http://www.ferc.gov)) under the link to Documents and Filings. With eFiling, you can provide comments in a variety of formats by attaching them as a file with your submission. New eFiling users must first create an account by clicking on "eRegister." You must select the type of filing you are making. If you are filing a comment on a particular project, please select "Comment on a Filing";
- (3) You can file a paper copy of your comments by mailing them to the following address:  
 Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary  
 Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
 888 First Street NE, Room 1A  
 Washington, DC 20426

## BRIEF NEWS AND VIEWS

### DENALI NATIONAL PARK STAFFING CHANGES LEAVE GAPS

In recent months it has been hard not to notice the passage of a number of year-round employees from the Denali National Park ranks. Recent departures have included South District Ranger (Acting Chief Ranger) John Leonard, who is moving to Washington, DC to oversee policy for the NPS Law Enforcement Branch; Deputy Superintendent and former Chief of Maintenance Eric Smith, who is moving to Glacier National Park to assume the post of Assistant Superintendent; Lead Wildlife Biologist Steven Arthur, who accepted the Lead Biologist position for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge; and B&U Foreman and former park electrician Jonathan Fitch, who accepted a Chief of Maintenance job at John Day Fossil Beds National Monument in Oregon. The list does not stop there. In the early summer a number of other positions were vacated and have yet to be filled, including the Wilderness District Ranger (the position tasked with overseeing the backcountry and wilderness compliance), Public Information Officer, Park Pilot, National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) Specialist and the Assistant Chief of Maintenance, as well as a number of field ranger positions. And looking back to over a year ago, the Chief Ranger position has been unfilled for more than a year and a half and the Chief of Concessions was unfilled for more than two years.

An era of tenures run-their-course, retirements-of-the-venerated and shifting management priorities has made for a heavy rotation of faces in Denali, different from not too many years ago when faces were as familiar as the iconic landscape itself. Perhaps it is the re-sintering of ground after a geologic event. The question remains, was the shift timely? Regardless, the passage of staff, especially those with long tenures, is disruptive and leads to loss in continuity. DCC hopes to see a settling of faces and positions, especially those of Chief Ranger, Lead Wildlife Biologist, NEPA Specialist and Assistant Superintendent in the coming months. ☞

### DENALI, SUBARU & ZERO LANDFILL

In 2015 the National Park Service (NPS), National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) and the automotive company, Subaru began a partnership to reduce waste in National Parks as a challenge for the Park Service Centennial in 2016. NPCA and Subaru selected three parks to begin planning around waste reduction, choosing Yosemite, Grand Tetons and Denali. The goal of the partnership is to replicate the successes of Subaru's manufacturing plant in Indiana, which achieved "zero land fill" status in 2007 through reducing packaging and recycling efforts.

NPCA and Subaru began visits to the Denali during the summer. The first visit was a basic orientation, including a journey to Kantishna, facility tours in the park headquarters and in Doyon-Aramark areas and site visits to Denali Borough landfill and the Fairbanks-North Star Borough landfill. The second visit was more involved, culminating in rummaging through the trash by the Subaru team to detail what actually goes into the trash in Denali. The third and last visit to date involved planning and execution strategies. During the winter, NPS, NPCA and Subaru hope to implement waste reduction strategies. For more information: <http://www.subaru.com/csr/environment.html#!/2015/03/19>

A question to the reader: What do you do with your waste? And, how can this partnership improve your household's attainment of "zero land fill." If you have suggestions or thoughts send them to: [dena\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:dena_superintendent@nps.gov) or [clay\\_walker@denaliborough.com](mailto:clay_walker@denaliborough.com). ☞

### SENATOR LISA MURKOWSKI HOLDS HEARINGS ON ANILCA

On Thursday, December 3rd, the US Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, of whom Alaska's Senator Lisa Murkowski is the chairman, scheduled a hearing "to receive testimony on the implementation of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980, including perspectives on the Act's impacts in Alaska and suggestions for improvements of the Act." As DCC members know, ANILCA is one of the most important pieces of land legislation, having established millions of acres of conservation system units in Alaska, including the 4 million acre additions to Denali National Park and Preserve. ANILCA brought national park management into the modern era, requiring management plans and strong adherence to environmental protection. However, ANILCA has been under strong criticism in Alaska as a key example of

## BRIEF NEWS AND VIEWS *continued from previous page*

federal overreach and the lockup of lands from resource development in this state. Among those scheduled to testify are Senator John Coghill of Fairbanks and Rod Arno, Executive Director of the Alaska Outdoor Council. Their comments are likely to be critical of ANILCA. DCC plans to sign on to a conservation-group letter identifying the positive impacts of ANILCA in Alaska. Comments can be submitted to Lisa Murkowski up to 10 days after the date of the hearing. More information will be available on DCC's Facebook page. 

### **DALL SHEEP WORKING GROUP ESTABLISHED BY FISH AND GAME WILL MEET DEC 5-6**

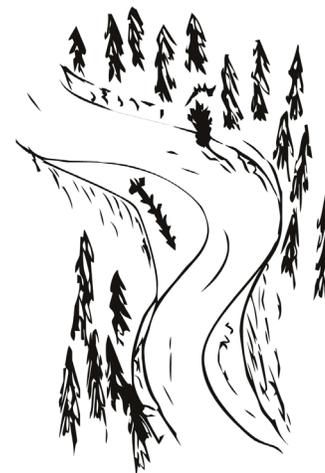
In recent years, the Alaska Board of Game has seen an increasing number of proposals attempting to deal with conflicts around sheep hunting in all parts of Alaska. The Board has already agreed to consider 28 proposals on sheep hunting alone at its March 2016 meeting. Much of the concern centers on declining sheep populations (or inadequate science on their numbers in certain areas), increasing conflicts between resident and non-resident hunters, and conflict with air services who transport sheep hunters into the field. At its spring 2015 meeting the Board of Game decided that, in view of intense user conflicts, it might be advisable to form a stakeholder group to develop recommendations. The working group will be meeting for the first time on the weekend of December 4-5, 2015 in Anchorage at the Spenard Community Recreation Center. The working group is huge, with 30+ members, most of whom represent hunting and guiding groups. The only member who appears to represent non-consumptive users is Kneeland Taylor, from the Alaska Wildlife Alliance. Locally, the Middle Nenana Fish and Game Advisory Committee is represented by Coke Wallace. The National Park Service representative is listed as Laura Phillips. We appreciate the concept of stakeholder working groups for addressing thorny issues. However, we are not sure this working group is truly diverse. An update will be included in our next DCC News. 

### **NEON MONITORING PROJECT SUFFERS FINANCIAL AND LOGISTICAL SETBACKS**

Local DCC members remember the lengthy community discussion around the establishment of a National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) station on the upper Stampede Road. The site was intended to be one of a series of observatories providing a nationwide dataset of conditions across diverse ecosystems. Although the idea of a NEON observatory in the area was exciting, local citizens had serious concerns, including how the station would get its power supply and how the fragile tundra at the site of the station would be protected. Representatives of NEON responded with workable solutions and the community came to be generally at peace with the project. Unfortunately, however, now that the station has been constructed, the project as a whole is undergoing a major revision in scope, prompted by financial and logistical difficulties and strained relations with its funding agency, the National Science Foundation. Exactly how the downturn in funding and reduction in site capacity will affect the NEON station on the Stampede is unknown at press time. We will keep you posted. 

### **DCC JOINS AS AN AMICUS IN LAWSUIT AGAINST THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

Whether or not the National Park Service can regulate access on rivers across conservation system units is a hotly debated issue in Alaska. This issue was at the core of a lawsuit filed by John Sturgeon against the National Park Service in 2011, *Sturgeon v. Masica*. In the lawsuit, Sturgeon claimed that NPS did not have the authority to regulate traffic on navigable waters across conservation system units (he used ANILCA access provisions to justify his claim). Sturgeon's problem: he wanted to drive a hovercraft on the Yukon and Nation Rivers, within Yukon-Charley National Preserve, to hunt moose. NPS regulations prohibited the use of hovercraft. Sturgeon lost his case in the Alaska District Court and in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. On October 1, 2015, the US Supreme Court agreed to hear this case. This will be Sturgeon's final opportunity to present his case. DCC has been asked to join several conservation organizations as an amicus for the National Park Service, and we have decided to join. An amicus in a case may submit its own brief, and that brief will be submitted by Trustees for Alaska. The Supreme Court will likely hear the case in January. Stay tuned. 



Alaska Native Knowledge Network

# DCC NEWS

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### Denali Citizens Council



*Advocating for Denali's Wilderness, Wildlife and Way of life.*

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