

DENALI BOROUGH BEGINS A NEW PLANNING EFFORT AGNEW::BECK WILL HELP PLAN FOR 50,000 ACRES OF MUNICIPAL LAND ENTITLEMENT (MLE) LANDS


by Brian Napier

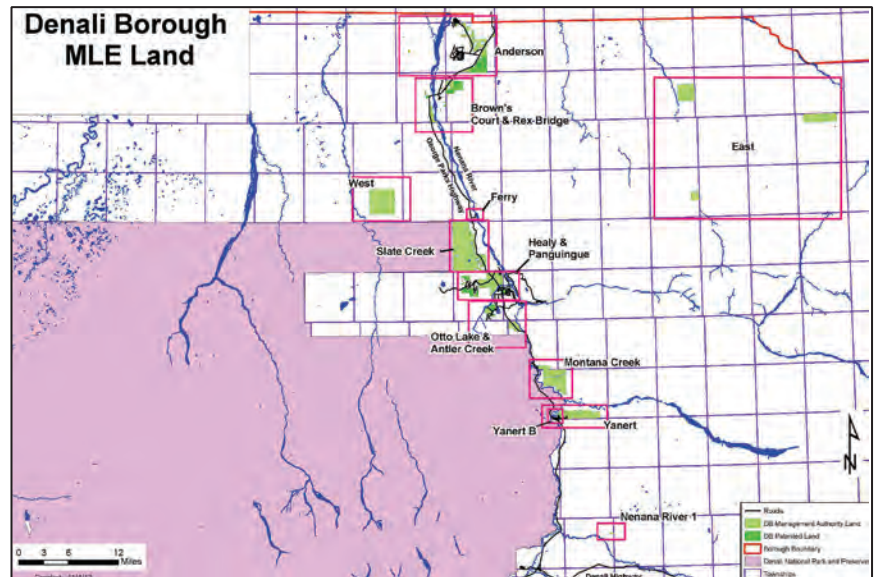
The Denali Borough took a big step in early August of 2015, one that went largely unnoticed by the public, but demonstrates important growth for the young borough. The Borough hired Agnew::Beck, a multidisciplinary consulting firm based in Anchorage, to assist with creating a clearer system for managing 50,000 acres of borough lands (shown in green on the map to the right). The Denali Borough covers approximately 8.2 million acres, but the Borough itself only owns approximately 50,000 acres, granted by the State of Alaska through the Municipal Land Entitlements (MLE) program. In 2014 the last of the land entitlements were conveyed to the Borough from the state. Along with these conveyances there also stands a growing list of management challenges, including pedestrian safety, commercial versus residential conflicts, and waste disposal. For the Denali Borough the timing felt right to seek professional help in organizing a better land management system for its parcels, which stretch from Anderson to Cantwell and contain land both on and off the current road system. While many members of the Assembly and Planning Commission are well tenured in their roles, and most residents appreciate and often celebrate a DIY culture of governance, the necessity of proactive planning in managing borough lands for their full potential is undeniable.

Chris Beck, co-owner and operator of Agnew::Beck, introduced his company to the group gathered in early August. Attendees included assembly members, the mayor, planning commissioners and a few concerned residents. Chris described how Agnew::Beck has assisted a number of rural Alaskan communities with land use planning and the establishment or refurbishing of necessary land management documents, such as borough codes and management plans. Chris allayed concerns of an Anchorage firm imposing its sensibilities on rural Alaska by asking questions of what the attendees are looking for in lands management. He reiterated that Agnew::Beck's job is to help improve what management exists and create tools that will assist the borough in managing its lands in the future.

Specifically, Agnew::Beck was to provide suggestions on revising borough land codes, preparing recommendations for a land classification system, and drafting plans for individual borough parcels. Agnew::Beck initially suggested revising borough code 4.25 to include no more than three classifications: land remaining in long term public ownership, land remaining in a "land bank," and that which should be sold for revenue "disposal". Simply put, this is the "keep, hold, sell" model. Agnew::Beck is also preparing critiques and fixes to the current code system to address the role of entities in decision making, the tracking of easements, and improvement of the permits system.

While it is not hard to imagine the borough being involved in land management on more than its own lands, there is no thin veil behind which the borough is hiding. Though there are many pressing concerns regarding land management in the Denali Borough, shoring up and improving management of its own lands is its only goal in this initiative—a relatively small step and a long distance from active involvement in what happens on private lands in the borough.

Agnew::Beck is only starting the process of assessment and will be coming back to the Denali Borough numerous times to meet with the public and stakeholders. A listening session is planned for October 12, 2015. If you have questions about the process, or want to comment or provide insight to the Agnew::Beck consultants, contact Chris Beck at chris@agnewbeck.com or visit <http://agnewbeck.com>. DCC will continue to Facebook, email and post to our website regarding this partnership and the development of a land management system on borough lands. 



Map showing MLEs (in green), from Denali Borough website

FROM THE BOARD

by Hannah Ragland

As sandhill cranes and white-fronted geese fly overhead, another whirlwind of a summer is coming to a close. For some of us, this means the waning of summer jobs, and for others this signals the start of winter work. For me, working in the school system, the cranes' departure signals the start of my busy season, and a return to work with the children that delight and inspire me. Sometimes the job is daunting, and the workload overwhelming, but through the support of our peers we do all that we can do help our students grow. It is no different in conservation work: the workload doesn't go away, but through teamwork and a community of passionate individuals, and the inspiration of Denali's epic landscape, we have maintained a high level of involvement in areas that concern our members.

As with education, we can't effectively do this work in isolation, or without training in how to best accomplish our goals. As we move into the fall, DCC moves into planning for the upcoming year, and with it comes some exciting board development opportunities. We recently became members of the Foraker Group, an agency based out of Anchorage that assists nonprofit groups throughout the state in training for board development and planning for sustainability. While the combined experience of our current Board of Directors creates quite the resume, managing a nonprofit (for most of us) is something we do not have professional experience with.

We have a long list of topics we'd like to work with Foraker on, and have decided to first move forward with work to bring back a paid Community Organizer position. There are many details yet to sort out as we work to develop an employee handbook, figure out payroll details, and other nuts and bolts that need to be considered in order to create a position that is sustainable for us. Our goal is to have the framework in place to be able to hire an employee in the spring. For me, and others on the board, becoming a member of the Foraker Group means that I can focus my energy and efforts on the things I am passionate about, which I can assure you don't include writing an employee handbook or figuring out how to do payroll.

While our board will need to be actively engaged in developing and maintaining this framework, Foraker's involvement provides the assurance that as we move forward we are on the right track in how we work, while what we work on remains guided by our mission and members. ☞



Native Knowledge Network

HELP US PLAN FOR AN EMPLOYEE

As we move forward with planning for an employee, we hope you can help us decide what the position looks like.

- ☞ In what areas do you think DCC should increase its efforts?
- ☞ What time of the year would you like to see more engagement?
- ☞ What kind of information would help you feel like a well-informed citizen?
- ☞ How would you like to receive the information? Maintain what we do now, something else?

Email us at mail@denalicitizens.org. We look forward to hearing what you think!

Inside

Borough seeks planning help	1	State Wildlife Action Plan	8
From the Board	2	ACR #7 voted down	9
Thank you, Member/Donors	3	Hydro projects discussed	10
Road construction & its discontents	4	Brief News and Views	11
Kris Fister interview	5-7		


THANK YOU, MEMBER/DONORS

by Nancy Bale

It's that time of year - snow and fall colors arrive, friends and acquaintances begin to depart for southern climes, and we're feeling some relief from the crazy pace of summer. Still, in many ways summer is too short, the passage of time too rapid - the melting snow, the chorus of birds, a riot of wildflowers, appearance of cubs, calves and lambs, hot days, wildfire smoke, ripe berries, and now the prance and style of caribou and moose with antler and pelt in finest form.

I was able to spend some quality time in the park this summer, including a couple of wonderful shuttle trips. On my most recent trip, all the way to Kantishna, Kim Turnbull, a 15 year veteran driver, was at the helm. It was a good day, one of those partly cloudy days when light played back and forth on the peaks, with termination dust clearly present. Kim was a trove of information, including how best to spot wildlife and how to operate those cranky windows successfully. She insisted on, and got, complete quiet at wildlife stops. As with most shuttle rides, I found the esprit

aboard the bus outstanding. When stopped for wildlife, Kim turned off the engine, and with the windows down and everyone quiet, the sounds of wind, water and birds flooded in, broken only by camera shutters clicking. Thanks Kim, for the great, ten hour trip. And thanks, too, for the many Denali photos you've let us use in the newsletter.

Recently, DCC elected officers and began moving toward our fall planning activities, including our Annual Board Retreat. We're hoping to involve local members somehow in our retreat activities. Stay tuned to member alerts and newsletters for more information and be sure to *Like* us on Facebook, where you will find the most up-to-date information on meetings, events and opportunities to comment. 



With Kantishna shuttle driver Kim Turnbull

DONATIONS SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

TAIGA

Susan & David Braun
Lee Lipscomb
Don Soileau & Denise Hanson
Mark Luttrell

SUMMIT/MAJOR DONOR

Julie Boselli
Stewart Cubley
David Laughton
Sherry Lewis
Martha McPheeters

TUNDRA

Sara Barbieri
Paula Earp & Matt Irinaga
Shae Irving

Your donations are
tax-deductible

DCC's Tax ID is 92-0060459

CORRECTIONS FROM LAST NEWSLETTER:

We misspelled donor Jeralyn Hath's name by adding an additional "n". Sorry Jeralyn, and thank you again! We neglected to mention that Carol McIntyre and Ray Hander's contribution was meant to honor Charles and Charlotte Bird. And, in the article on wolves, we gave an erroneous email address for Denali's Superintendent. The correct address is don_striker@nps.gov.

A POETIC LOOK AT SUMMER ROAD CONSTRUCTION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

by Erica Watson



An update for anyone who hasn't spent time on the Parks Highway this summer: it's been a bumpy, slow-moving, unpredictable, and noisy mess. Potholes have wreaked havoc on tires, made normally punctual and serene people late for work and filled with road rage, and made otherwise rational, conservation-minded folks consider circumnavigating the Denali region entirely and driving to Fairbanks on the Denali to Richardson Highways (or was that just me?). The communities mobilized, and working hours shifted to nights, solving some people's commuting problems and creating others. And so it goes: summer in the wilderness.

I remember a couple years ago, talking to a young NPS seasonal about his experience living at C-Camp while old cabins were being torn down and replaced. He commented on the nonstop noise, the back-up alarms and excavators outside his cabin window. He would have preferred birdsong and the rustle of a breeze in the aspens, but, he said, "I guess that's the tradeoff for getting to live in a national park." I remember just sort of blinking at him, not sure how to respond.

We Are All Built for Doing

He said no sugar
in the gas tanks. You don't
want to mess with the soul
of a bulldozer. "Perhaps not
a soul," she said later, "but
I'm quite certain a spirit." *

A restless one, ungrounded,
that spirit, unhinged but land-bound.
Cracked, too much use in cold, bolts
loosed and seams unwelded.

The spirit's in the house
with us, steals food at dinner.
The man sent to mend the body
while the spirit roams comes home,
hands cracked, face streaked
with grease, cursing the spirit
of the damned thing, so set
on movement and so latent,
unaided. Brokenness is part

of being. One cannot be blamed
for doing what one is built
to do. We are all built for doing:

Pour sugar. Grease axles. Break
under strain, both iron and spirit.

Outside the park, the juxtaposition of the log cabin in the woods and the 24/7 sounds of heavy industry speak to a slightly different set of contradictions. Still, as irritated as I might be that, for the few months a year that one might be able to sleep with the windows open, the sounds of rock crushers, alarms, and, as I type, the smell of wet asphalt wafts through McKinley Village (a sign of progress). It would be delusional to try to convince ourselves that our lives are anything less than dependent on the Parks Highway and its maintenance, or that our relationship with gravel is anything but complicated (we can curse the extraction process, but who hasn't coveted a neighbor's freshly delivered pile of three-inch minus, its potential seemingly limitless?).

It's come to my attention, in those moments seeking Zen while waiting for the pilot car or waking up yet again to the sounds of the gravel pits surrounding the house (have I mentioned the noise?) that, though I rarely write poetry anymore, when I do, it is often about construction. Most of it doesn't warrant sharing, but I've become pretty fond of the poem to the left. It speaks to my fascination with the contradictions of life in the Denali Borough, especially for those of us who once imagined ourselves as separate from and, perhaps, in direct opposition to the sort of development that surrounds us, and is especially visible in places like this, where we tend to focus on the lack of it. It's also a good reminder of reasons, other than legal, not to mess with the equipment in the gravel pits, no matter how loud it gets. ☞

* Poet and environmental philosopher Gary Snyder said that he told Earth First! founder Dave Foreman that he wouldn't put sugar in bulldozers' gas tanks because "bulldozers have feelings too. They have souls." The response, "I'm quite certain they have a spirit," comes from writer Ernestine Hayes.

KRIS FISTER: WHAT CHANGES AND WHAT STAYS THE SAME

by Erica Watson

Last spring, long-time McKinley Village resident and Denali National Park Public Affairs Officer Kris Fister took a new job as the Chief of Interpretation of Gates of the Arctic National Park, Yukon-Charlie Rivers National Preserve, and the Alaska Public Lands Information Center, based in Fairbanks. She oversees interpretation in these remote parks, and has spent the summer getting to know parts of the state she hadn't seen before, and learning about the National Park Service's roles there. "It's kind of taken me back to the early parts of my career, where you're out doing different things: hiking in the backcountry, law enforcement, maintenance - all at once, rather than specializing in one aspect of management - even though I'm living in Fairbanks," she says about her new job. Still, Kris has been a familiar face at Denali this summer, visiting friends and attending community events; we're lucky that she didn't move far.

I've gotten to know Kris over the years as a neighbor, a fellow knitter, and a reliable source of information about the park. I admire her measured approach to delicate issues, and her continued enthusiasm for our shared home. Kris agreed to share some of her experiences and thoughts with fellow DCC members, and we each sat down with a glass of wine in our respective homes—it's not the same as knitting group, but it'll have to do—and talked on the phone about her career and the places and people that led her here.

Kris' first job in a national park was an instructor position with the Yosemite Institute. While mostly a school-year program, in the summer of 1981 her job included taking kids on backpacking trips. "Yosemite Institute employees were thought of by a lot of the NPS folks as kind of long-haired hippie granola types," she reflected, "but after that first summer I wanted a different perspective on the park, and I was fortunate to get hired by the NPS to work in the Mariposa Grove (giant sequoias) the next summer, in 1982."

After a couple summers in the Mariposa Grove, Kris came to Alaska for a season at Katmai National Park in 1984. "I was blown away," she said, sounding a little giddy. "Big bears, salmon...it wasn't just the big bears though. It was the whole cycle that took place over that summer, watching scrawny bears come in May, and then salmon come in in June, and seeing the bears had to work hard to get those salmon. The salmon start to spawn and the bears leave, and they come back in the fall and they're just huge. Watching all those creatures dependent on that cycle: magpies, gulls, everything—the decay of the salmon is so integral to that whole system. That's when I was hooked on Alaska. It just fascinated me."

After three summer seasons in Katmai, Kris returned to Yosemite for a seasonal park ranger position, backpacking in the Sierra and educating people about proper food storage and bears. "Black bears there are smarter than backpackers, and they were good at getting food, and people had to learn how to keep that from happening. That was really fun—it was a great summer." Still, Alaska kept its hold on her, and she came north again for three summers in Glacier Bay, what she describes as "another phenomenal job, getting on cruise ships as an interpreter, and then later as commissioned law enforcement, working in conjunction with the wildlife troopers. I was able to hike the outer coast of the Bay, and see places that visitors never see." Laughing, Kris told a story about a leaky raft and devil's club, and how, being the only woman on the crew and the lightest weight, she was sent across a lake above a small waterfall in the leaky raft first to test the field repairs. I asked about the changes she's seen in the NPS workforce.



Kris finishes the 2013 Oosik Classic Ski Race in Talkeetna.
photo by Erica Watson

continued on next page

KRIS FISTER: WHAT CHANGES, WHAT STAYS THE SAME

continued from previous page

ERW: This isn't what I set out to ask about, but it makes me wonder: were you often the only woman around in those days? What are your thoughts on how the National Park Service has changed for women?

KF: I was fortunate because just before I started working, it really changed. In the mid-70s they still had those little uniform skirts, and before that those awful flight attendant suits, but by the time I started in 1982 we were wearing the same uniforms as men. There were a lot of women in interp, less in other fields, but I was lucky. I know a lot of women working in permanent positions faced more challenges, but as a seasonal, especially in Alaska, I was able to work with men and other women and as long as you could do the work, it wasn't a problem.

ERW: And then you returned to work in Yosemite for a few years...what was your first job at Denali?

KF: My first job in Denali was officially in 1995. I got permanent status in Yosemite, in the public information office. I had been answering the information phone line - like Alex Lindeman's early job here - and this was before the internet. Wow, it's interesting to think how much has changed...so we answered their questions on the phone, and people still wrote a lot of letters, and we'd provide them with information about the park. There just weren't as many ways to learn about it before you were there. Eventually, newspapers started calling to ask about conditions and I'd provide them the same info as visitors. Gradually I learned more about the sensitivities of communication with different entities, and by the time I left Yosemite I was the public affairs officer. But I wanted to come back to Alaska, and was hired in summer of 1995, as the West District interpretation supervisor. I supervised the staff who worked at the old Eielson VC and also did the campground programs at Wonder Lake - there were only 6 interpreters. Did that job for two and a half years, till July 1998, when I returned to California as Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park's Public Information Officer. I learned so much there, working with a really great mentor, and spent five years there.

ERW: When you returned to California in between Alaska jobs, did you plan on coming back here to stay?

KF: I was never sure if I'd come back to stay, but I came back to visit people and places every year while I was working in California. I still had a lot of friends here, and felt really connected to the community. When the PIO job opened at Denali, I applied and got it. Denali had never had a full time public information officer, and it was such a fascinating opportunity; I had to try it.

ERW: Do you have a particular memory that stands out to you as the moment you recognized that Denali was going to be so central in your life and career, or was that more of a gradual recognition?

KF: It was very gradual. Like I said, I wasn't sure, but I loved being in Alaska. Really, it was the community, which I'd found both at Toklat and living outside the park. And it gradually became home. I can't imagine I'll find that community anywhere else.

ERW: Is there a part of the park you feel especially connected to?

KF: Anything west of the East Fork. And Toklat, of course. Having the opportunity to be out there, walk up the Toklat in the evenings; and of course there are other places too, as I got to know it better.



Native Knowledge Network

continued on next page

ERW: What changes have struck you the most in the years you've spent in this area?

KF: Certainly there are changes in terms of how much stuff we have in the park. The Denali Visitor Center and the other buildings on the campus were hard to see go in, but we didn't have a visitor center on the east end, and certainly those facilities are being used by visitors. The type of visitors we see are different, and the industry makes it easier for people who don't have the ability or interest to plan their own trip the way they used to. I wouldn't want everyone to try to experience the park like me, because that would make it very crowded out there. Years ago we said we were a trail-less wilderness, but we weren't really. Those new trails put in during the past several years help people get out and experience the place. I do think that new development in the east end has been beneficial to help people connect. And there are those who say we've sacrificed the east end, and I don't think that's true. Once you get further west, and off the bus, the experience hasn't changed.

ERW: What about the experience of working in the park?

KF: It's so much more (technologically) connected now, and it's interesting that that's what people want—visitors and staff. I think seasonal staff feels connected to the place, but they also have a need to BE connected. That's not what people used to want, especially out west. There are different expectations for seasonal staff—in what they want and what they do. When I first came here, I was fortunate to be able to work with many seasonals who had been here for several years, and who stayed in Alaska the rest of the year. And that's harder to do now. Many people move on after less time now, and have to work harder to get a permanent job. So it's a different kind of community.

Also, I liked the cooperation with drivers, and ANHA (now Alaska Geographic), the bus dispatchers—everyone out west, including park staff from all divisions. It felt like we were all working for the same thing. It seems like that's become a little more fragmented.

But I do think that once you get off the bus, the experience hasn't changed. I've never gotten tired of getting on a bus—the bus is part of that journey down the road, and once you get off it and walk around somewhere, that experience hasn't changed much.

ERW: What do you imagine will be the most significant challenges to the NPS in the coming years?

KF: Most of the time I was at DENA there was a workforce that had been there for eons, and those people—my generation, the baby boomers—are retiring, and that's a transition that strikes me. A lot of higher level positions open up, I see people getting higher grade jobs more rapidly with less experience, and I worry that sometimes that difference in experience might lead to folks' making decisions that are not as wise as they should be.

The bottom line is what's in the best interest of the park. People of course have different aspirations when they come to the NPS, but I hope that people remember that the park is at the center of it. We need to make sure we're providing our employees with opportunities to grow, but there's no training that will substitute for experience.

I think it's important to continue to maintain channels of communications between other members of the communities we're part of. In much of the time I spent at Denali, I felt we were doing that very well.

Denali is a huge draw for people coming up to this state, and I think it's important the park manage that access for people to have a phenomenal experience. It's a challenge because it involves all users of the park road--drivers, others. I do wish the bus system were easier to understand. That remains a challenge. But I think Denali is set on a good path, and it needs to hold the course, and continue to be open to the input it receives from various entities who feel such passion about the place.

Even though I'm not there anymore, it remains a very special place in my heart. 



STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN IN FINAL REVIEW

PLAN IDENTIFIES SPECIES OF GREATEST CONSERVATION NEED, BUT HAS LIMITED SCOPE

by Nancy Bale

Although much of DCC's interactions with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game have been with the "regulatory side," chiefly the Board of Game, we recently interacted with staff of the Threatened, Endangered and Diversity Species Program, who are preparing the Alaska Wildlife Action Plan 2015. This plan, revised every decade, is prepared using state funds and federal funds from the State Wildlife Grants (SWG) program.

In order to qualify for SWG funds, each state must prepare a Wildlife Action Plan, describing wildlife species and habitats in greatest conservation need, the key threats to those species, and conservation actions needed to ensure that their populations remain healthy. The SWG program is the only federal program whose explicit goal is to prevent endangered species listings.


Matt Kirchhoff, Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator, was our contact at Fish and Game. Matt was responsive and answered most of my questions. I found the plan interesting and comprehensive. Public comment on the Draft Plan is now closed, and the Final Plan will appear in a few weeks. We submitted comments on September 4, 2015, and you can read them on our website.

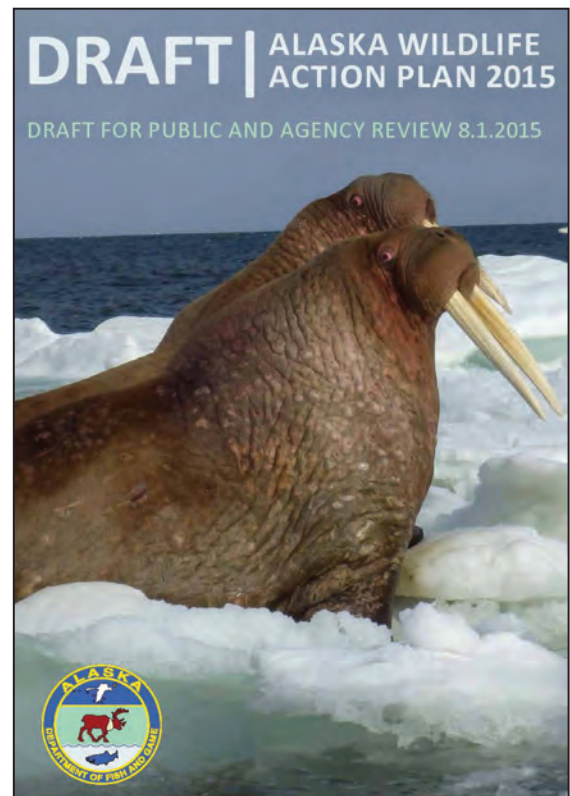
The plan's lists of SGCN (species of greatest conservation need) will be the basis for monitoring and action projects over the next ten years. In the Draft Plan, by design, the lists include non-game animals. The rationale for not listing game animals is that the Department of Fish and Game already spends money on the regulatory side to monitor and manage these species. We asked the Department to reconsider this exception, since it severely limits the scope of the plan, and since, in many cases, including Denali wolves, the research and monitoring attention is quite variable among species. However, the Department is unlikely to consider the conservation status of caribou, moose, dall's sheep, most wolves, grizzly and black bears, and wolverines under this plan. See our comments for a deeper analysis of this issue and our recommendation that their status be subject to the criteria in this plan.

Despite the limited scope of this plan, the SGCN lists provide a very interesting glimpse of 'at risk' species in Alaska, largely marine mammals, birds, and intertidal species, some of them already known to the conservation community, and many of them at risk because of climate change. The plan's enlightened approach to climate change as an important factor in species risk is refreshing. And despite opposition to listing of hunted animals, the Draft Plan does list a few, who are sufficiently at risk to warrant it, including the Alexander Archipelago wolf, the Arctic Fox, the Polar Bear and the Walrus.

The lists include some birds that spend summers in Denali, and are at risk on a number of 'watch lists' and for other reasons. The list includes species whose numbers I have noticed to be in decline since I arrived at Denali, including the Whimbrel, Short eared Owl, Golden Eagle, Long Tailed Jaeger, Long-tailed Duck, American Golden Plover and Boreal Owl. To review the lists, you can download the Draft Plan from the Fish and Game website at http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/species/wildlife_action_plan/draft_alaska_wildlife_action_plan_2015.pdf

As the authors of the Draft Plan admit, there are constraints on what action can be taken within the borders of Alaska to protect many of these species, whose numbers are threatened because of global changes in habitat. The plan does describe actions that could be taken to support species diversity in Alaska, including removal of invasive species where they are choking off habitat. The plan also commits to controlling human harvest, if it can be shown to be a threat to individual species. Much of the action based on this plan will be to support research into greater understanding of what is placing these species at risk. Projects based on the Final Plan will be eligible for SWG funding.

We'll let you know how the Department responds to our comments. 



Cover of Draft Alaska Wildlife Action Plan 2015, by ADF&G

DENALI WOLVES REMAIN AT RISK ON STATE LANDS

ACR #7 VOTED DOWN BY THE BOARD OF GAME, PUSHING A BUFFER PROPOSAL TO 2017

by Nancy Bale

The fate of Denali wolves when they venture onto state lands outside the park remains unsettled, and may be that way until 2017. An Emergency Order by Commissioner Sam Cotten of the Department of Fish and Game this spring, closing the last two weeks of wolf season after three wolves from the East Fork pack met their deaths through human activities in the Wolf Townships, was the only regulatory measure the Department was willing to take this year. Starting August 10th, hunting of wolves (and bears) was again legal on state lands northeast of the park, and additional hunting pressure began on September 1st, with the start of moose season. Bear baiting will again be legal from April 15th to June 30th, 2016. Wolf hunting ends on May 30th, 2016. Bag limits for wolves remain 10 per hunter and for trappers there is no bag limit.

ACR#7 would allow the introduction of a wolf buffer proposal at March 2016 BoG

In order to get a wolf buffer proposal before the Board of Game in 2016, DCC, along with the Alaska Wildlife Alliance, filed an Agenda Change Request (ACR) on June 22, 2015. We were optimistic that the Board would accept our ACR. Signals we'd been getting from Board of Game members and Department employees indicated a readiness to discuss the problem as soon as possible, and the Emergency Order alluded to it as well. The Press Release accompanying the Emergency Order put it this way - "Recent changes in bear hunting regulations have resulted in more hunters being in the field in May. Hunters commonly seek other legal species during bear hunts." Fish and Game Commissioner Sam Cotten stated, "This situation 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." What better opportunity to consider this additional information than for the Board of Game to do so at its March 2016 meeting, we asked in the ACR.

ACR voted down at August 7th Board of Game teleconference, 6-1


However, the Board failed to engage in a rigorous discussion of important points in the ACR - declining numbers of wolves, densities near the Department's own action parameters, new regulations increasing the likelihood of hunters being "in the field" in May, when wolf season is still open on state lands next to the park, and the chilling effect of a moratorium already lasting 5 years. The Board of Game did not address the content of the Emergency Order, issued by its own department, in any meaningful way. Only Board member Nate Turner, who attended DCC's Wildlife at the Boundaries forum last August, voted for ACR#7.

Unfortunately, the problem of additional hunting pressure on wolves in May and June has not been resolved, and this pressure will continue to be a factor in late spring wolf deaths on state lands next to the park, during denning and whelping time. Discussing this problem and dealing with it in 2016 would have been the best way to resolve ongoing issues, but the Board of Game simply could not do it.

Moving forward, we have been keeping the lines of communication open with the Board of Game, and may introduce an ACR at the next opportunity, in January 2016. The Governor will be appointing two new members to the Board of Game in 2016, as terms expire. We hope for more diversity on the BoG, moving forward, but real change may be many years in the future.

Meanwhile, how are Denali wolves doing?

No wolf 'viewability index' for Denali has been published yet for 2015, but we have anecdotal reports of wolf sightings throughout the park. Wondering how wolves are doing, in general, this summer, we asked Resources and Science Team Leader Dave Schirokauer for the latest information. He got back to us with the following information, on August 8th;

At this point in the breeding cycle, we can only confirm denning for collared animals. Additional breeding is possible for non-collared animals but we won't know until the fall survey. To date, we have confirmed denning for 6 packs (Riley Cr, Grant Cr, Myrtle, Iron Cr, and Bearpaw), confirmed no reproduction at one (McKinley Slough) and uncertain status for the remaining 4 (E. Fork, John Hansen, Hot Slough, Somber). In the first 3 of these we do not have a female collared so it is difficult to find dens. In the Somber pack, we have only the female collared, she is outside the park to the west, and her collar is difficult to locate. We are just starting to see pups so the pup counts are quite incomplete. The Riley pack did den at 7 mile. They have moved to a rendezvous site several miles away. 

DCC HOSTS DISCUSSION OF HYDRO PROJECTS

LARGE CROWD MEETS WITH PROJECT SPONSORS AT TONGLÉN LAKE LODGE

by Nancy Bale

Earlier this year the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission granted preliminary permits to Northwest Power Services to do initial studies and analysis on three proposed small hydro projects, on the Jack River, Carlo Creek and Bruskasna Creek. Their purpose would be to generate power and sell it through the Anchorage-Fairbanks Electrical Intertie. Involved with Northwest Power Services on two of these projects was Gordon Carlson, Cantwell resident and businessman.

Brent Smith, president of Northwest Power Services, joined Carlson to describe their proposed projects and answer questions from concerned citizens for about two hours on the evening of July 27, 2015. Hannah Ragland, DCC President, moderated the panel discussion and received kudos from attendees for her measured approach and ability to keep the conversation moving in productive channels.

Although not a member of the panel, Joe Bovee, Vice President of Land and Resources at Ahtna Corporation, joined the group. Much of the land proposed for these projects is owned by Ahtna, and the corporation could become a source of funds for what are likely to be extensive costs if the projects move forward. In addition, Ahtna shareholders, including residents of the Native Village of Cantwell, could benefit from revenues generated by the projects.

Attendees wanted to know what if any benefits there would be to the average borough resident. They were told that the presence of additional, local sources of power to feed into the intertie would make local power "more reliable" and that the community would have the added satisfaction of supporting renewable energy. When asked more directly about financing for the project, Smith said "we don't know this right now." In fact, Northwest Power Services has not been in Alaska for long, having come from Idaho, where it was incorporated as a "base firm specializing in project management, construction supervision and project operation for hydroelectric generating facilities." From the drift of the discussion, it seemed that Northwest Power Services had done little to study the three sites since the preliminary permits were granted, and did not anticipate spending much money in the first round of studies, during which historic flow data would be supplemented with on-site measurements. In addition, landforms, habitat, fisheries and potential for power generation would be analyzed using existing information. The permit has a three year duration, but requires a progress report every six months.

Smith alluded to a study that would be produced "next spring" that would contain a feasibility analysis and would help them determine whether the projects could move forward. Doubt was expressed by some as to the overall feasibility of the smaller projects, given the relatively low flow rates of Carlo and Bruskasna Creeks, especially in winter.

I was glad to have met the project proponents face-to-face, and to have experienced the diversity of interest in the Denali community about this project. Northwest Power Services and the Native Village of Cantwell have a long way to go in analyzing and vetting these projects. There are no more scheduled public meetings during this step of the process, but you may contact sponsors at;

Brent Smith, bsmith@nwpwrservices.com
907-414-8223

Gordon Carlson, Cantwell Village Hall,
hallvc@mtaonline.net, 907-768-2591



The Hydro Discussion Panel included DCC President Hannah Ragland, Northwest Power Services President Brent Smith, and Cantwell resident and small hydro promoter Gordon Carlson.
photo by Nancy Bale



A crowd estimated at close to fifty individuals from throughout the Denali Borough attended the Hydro Discussion. Donna Gates provided an excellent venue by offering the main lodge at Tonglén Lake.
photo by Nancy Bale

BRIEF NEWS AND VIEWS

SENATOR LISA MURKOWSKI'S STAFF VISITS CANTWELL, MEETS WITH DCC REPS

The Native Village of Cantwell invited DCC board members to attend a meeting with Senator Lisa Murkowski's energy staff on August 25. Three board members, Nan Eagleson, Brian Napier, and Erica Watson attended, along with Village of Cantwell representatives, Denali National Park Superintendent Don Striker, Ahtna, Inc. president Michelle Anderson, and Denali Borough Assembly member Krista Zappone. Pamela Rice and Lucy Murfitt are touring the state on Senator Murkowski's behalf, holding listening sessions with communities, with the goal of gaining a better understanding of communities' relationships with the federal government.

Conversation focused on Cantwell residents' concerns about what many experience as constantly shifting standards when it comes to upholding ANILCA, as well as lack of transparency in NPS concession agreements. "We're not seeing any way in as a smaller company," Anderson said about Ahtna's attempts to bid on NPS concessions, leading to conversation about National Parks as economic factors in surrounding communities. Eagleson responded with a reminder that the mission of the NPS is not primarily economic. Though priorities and ideologies varied, our conversation made it clear that everyone in the room places importance on many of the same resources and values, and is working for what we believe is best for our communities.

Many in attendance also spoke to the fact that they don't feel their communities' interests are represented by the current Board of Game. To that topic, Murfitt said, "It sounds like there's a lot of community vs. state issues, rather than federal." DCC Board members shared with the staff that we believe it's important to recognize that there are Alaskans who appreciate having a National Park as a neighbor. Rice, a former NPS employee, replied, "It's good for the Senator to hear that."

DCC was grateful to be included in this discussion, and looks forward to more opportunities to learn where our interests align with those of our neighbors.

PEDESTRIAN-ACTIVATED BEACON AND CROSSWALK TO BE INSTALLED IN HEALY

The Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT) is moving forward to improve pedestrian safety at the intersection of the Parks Highway with Healy Spur Road/Ranch Road. Construction of a "Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon" was added to an ongoing construction project, and will occur this fall. This area sees a considerable amount of traffic, particularly since Holland America Princess (HAP) decided to expand their employee housing at the intersection last year. Around 500 HAP employees reside in Healy, with housing buildings, dining halls and a bus barn on both sides of the highway. This invites conflicts, as there is no marked crossing and an almost constant stream of employees crossing the road at or near this intersection. Of course, HAP is not the only employer to provide seasonal housing in Healy. In fact, over a thousand seasonal employees are housed throughout the area, doubling the town's population in the summer. Uncontrolled development and such a large influx of seasonal workers affect more than pedestrian safety. HAP recently applied for water rights for up to 40,000 gallons of water per day between May and September, which would give them priority use over neighboring residents who have not yet applied for water rights. With no commitment from the Borough to zone or otherwise plan for private property, and reluctance of Borough residents to support this concept, sprawl in Healy, and other areas such as the McKinley Village Hotel, will continue unchecked. For more details about the pedestrian beacon, see: <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/resources/techsum/fhwasa09009/>

NEW REPORT DETAILS ECONOMIC STATUS OF DENALI BOROUGH

Thank you to Kris Capps for alerting the community about this report, published by the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development in September 2015. You can download it from our Facebook page or website. In five pages, the report gives a demographic picture of the 12,000 square mile borough, using data as recent as the year 2014. The Denali Borough is experiencing its 25th anniversary, relatively young for an Alaskan Borough.

Data in this report show that jobs in the Denali Borough actually triple in the summer. The median age of residents, as of 2014, was 43.3 years old. Income in the borough is high, by comparison with the statewide average. In 2013, the Denali Borough's per capita income with just under \$67,000, 33% above the statewide average. According to the report, the national park employs 281 federal workers, 91 of whom are permanent and at least 41 of whom work at the park year-round.

The Denali Borough

A diverse, stable rural economy

By NEAL FRIED

The sparsely populated Denali Borough covers more than 12,000 square miles at the center of Alaska, making it larger than nine states. About 70 percent of its area is Denali National Park and Preserve, home to Denali, North America's highest peak.

Nearly all of the borough's 1,785 residents live along a 70-mile stretch of the Parks Highway in Anderson, Cantwell, Berry, Healy, or McKinley Park. (See Exhibit 1.) Residents rely on RailBanks for many of their services, as it's only about 100 miles away.

Although the Denali Borough is young — 2015 is the 25th anniversary of its incorporation — most of its economic drivers gained a foothold nearly a century ago. Tourism, mining, and the military have built a fairly diverse economy. For its size, Denali Borough's economy is one of the most diverse in the state. It's also remained remarkably stable.

1 Borough Population
DENALI, 2000 to 2014

	2000	2010	2014
Denali Borough	1,539	1,729	1,785
Anderson	203	249	269
Cantwell	222	219	192
Berry	28	32	25
Healy	1,086	1,027	1,264
McKinley Park	142	195	175
Gold River	158	162	98

The rise of mining and tourism
The area's evolution began with gold mining in the Kachivha mining district during the early 1900s.

Source: U.S. Census and Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (2000 and 2014) and Alaska Bureau of Economic Research (2014)

DCC NEWS

PO Box 78 Denali Park, Ak 99755
<http://www.denalicitizens.org>
907-683-3396

*Join denali Citizens Council and receive
DCC News and email updates*

Editorial Board

Nancy Bale
Hannah Ragland
Erica Watson

Contributors

Nancy Bale
Kris Fister
Brian Napier
Hannah Ragland
Erica Watson

*Letters and submissions are welcome
mail@denalicitizens.org*

DCC Board of Directors

David Arnold
Nancy Bale, *Board Chair*
Nan Eagleson, *Secretary*
Brian Napier, *Vice-President*
Michael Raffaelli, *Treasurer*
Hannah Ragland, *President*
Erica Watson, *Newsletter Editor*

Non Profit Org
Postage
PAID
Anchorage, AK
Permit # 69

MOVING? TRAVELING?

Don't miss an issue of **DCC News**.
Write to us at mail@denalicitizens.org,
or call us at 907-683-3396 and give us address changes.

Denali Citizens Council



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

Join Us

Denali Citizens Council is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Our mission is to protect the natural integrity of Denali National Park and to promote a sustainable future for lands surrounding the Park.

Please join by filling out this form and mailing it to the address above. Or join on the web at <http://www.denalicitizens.org>.

Your contribution is tax deductible

Major donor (\$126 & up)

Summit (\$125)

Tundra (\$75)

Taiga (\$35)

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

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.