

Finding of No Significant Impacts

Relocate Park Seasonal Housing from Glenallen Maintenance Facility
to Mile 106.2 of the Richardson Highway, Copper Center, Alaska
Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve

The National Park Service (NPS) has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) that evaluates relocation of seasonal employee housing from the maintenance yard in Glennallen to a site situated near the new Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve headquarters and visitor center complex in Copper Center. The project entails:

- relocation of six (6) cabin units (each 120 square feet in area) and shower building;
- site grading for the structures and parking using a bulldozer;
- provisions for fresh water supplies;
- installation of a 2,000 gallon holding tank for sewage using a backhoe;
- underground trenching for electrical service (75 feet long, 2 feet deep); and
- contracted services for water and sewage hauling.

The site is located at mile 106.2 Old Richardson Highway approximately 0.25 mile from the headquarters and visitor center complex. The site encompasses 1.5 acres and is within an area formerly used for gravel extraction. The property is owned by the NPS but is not located in the park and preserve. Foundations of relocated structures will float on the ground surface. There will be no onsite disposal of wastewater or sewage. A well will not be developed and electrical service is locally available.

The purpose of the proposed project is to relocate and provide housing for seasonal employees, and eliminate existing land use conflicts between maintenance operations and seasonal housing co-located at the Glennallen Maintenance Facility. Maintenance yard activities involve daily moving of construction materials using forklifts and large trucks. Other maintenance-related operations include the water pump house, vehicle washing, equipment and material storage, carpentry, mechanical, storage of hazardous materials, hazardous waste accumulation, and freight receipt. Private residential activities associated with occupation of seasonal housing include use of personal vehicles and parking, and activities such as campfires, picnics, and volleyball.

Public Involvement

The 30-day public review period commenced on April 11, 2002 and closed on May 11, 2002. The EA's availability was announced on local radio stations KCAM and KCHU on April 11 through April 14. The EA was available electronically on the park home page. No comments were received on the EA.

Alternatives

The EA also evaluated the no-action alternative of not relocating park seasonal housing from the Glennallen Maintenance Facility. The no-action alternative would perpetuate an incompatible

land use between private residential and federal maintenance operations. The Glennallen Maintenance Facility would remain constrained for storage space.

Environmentally Preferred Alternative

The NPS preferred alternative to relocate park seasonal housing from Glennallen to Copper Center, Alaska, is the environmentally preferred alternative because it will provide a better living environment for seasonal NPS employees. The new location will be free of the noise and hazards associated with maintenance and construction activities, provide suitable conditions for residential activities, and have little effect on the environment.

Mitigation

Excess soil material stockpiled in the gravel pit in the vicinity of mile 106.2 Richardson Highway will be used for site restoration.

Environmental Consequences of Preferred Alternative

As documented in the EA, the NPS has determined that the preferred alternative can be implemented with no significant adverse effect to park management, vegetation and land cover, wildlife, or subsistence resources. The environmental effects of the preferred alternative are summarized below.

Park Management: The preferred alternative will eliminate an incompatible land use between residential and government maintenance operations. This alternative will increase material storage space at the Glennallen Maintenance Facility, enhance park maintenance operations, and create safer living conditions for six seasonal park employees.

Vegetation and Land Cover: There will be no impacts on vegetation and land cover as there will be no new surface disturbance with the preferred alternative. While the relocated seasonal housing development site will occupy 1.5 acres, it is within an area of previous surface disturbance.

Wildlife: Relocating the seasonal employee housing and development of other structures on the site will not result in the loss of any wildlife habitat.

Subsistence Resources: There will be no significant restriction on subsistence.

Decision

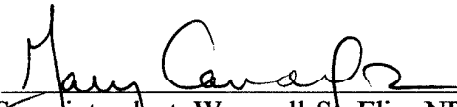
The NPS decision is to select the preferred alternative. The project will be implemented by the park's facility management division with contractor support, and scheduled to accommodate summer 2002 park operations. The decision included the mitigation measures identified in this finding of no significant impact.

Rationale for the Decision

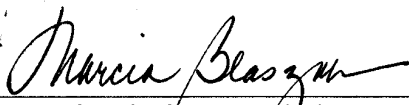
The preferred alternative will provide additional safety, space, and security for park maintenance activities at the Glennallen Maintenance Facility. Concurrently, the preferred alternative will provide increased safety and privacy for residents of seasonal park housing. The project will eliminate an incompatible land use, benefit park management operations, and cause no new surface disturbance. Because of negligible environmental impacts, and given that the project is not located within the authorized park and preserve boundary, the preferred alternative will not result in an impairment of resources that fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or that are key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park and preserve.

The preferred alternative complies with the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and Executive Orders 11988, 11990, and 12898. There will be no significant restriction of subsistence activities as documented by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, Title VIII, Section 810(a) Summary Evaluation and Findings.

I find that the preferred alternative does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and regulations of the Council of Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.9), and environmental impact statement will not be prepared for the project.

Recommended: 
Superintendent, Wrangell-St. Elias NP/P

May 11, 2002
Date

Approved: 
Acting Regional Director, Alaska

5/15/02
Date