

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Lake Camp Boat Launch and Day Use Facilities
Katmai National Park and Preserve

The National Park Service (NPS) has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) that evaluates upgrading the Lake Camp boat launching area in Katmai National Park and Preserve to include an improved boat ramp, parking and turnaround area, two docks, picnic tables, a double-vault toilet, and a fuel containment pad. The purpose of these facilities is to provide better public access to the park in general and, specifically, to enhance opportunities for local residents, park visitors, and park staff to use the Naknek Lake drainage by providing a safe and convenient site for launching vessels. An additional purpose of this project is to implement, in part, the 1986 *Katmai National Park and Preserve General Management Plan* (GMP).

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A 30-day public comment period was provided for the *Lake Camp Boat Launch and Day Use Facilities Environmental Assessment* (EA), from July 15 through August 13, 2000. Comments were received from the Lake and Peninsula Borough, the Alaska Division of Governmental Coordination, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, the U.S. Department of the Air Force, the National Parks and Conservation Association, and three individuals. None of these comments changed the EA's conclusions about the effect of the proposed action or other alternatives (see attached errata sheet for substantive comments and NPS responses).

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN THE EA

Three alternatives were evaluated in the *Lake Camp Boat Launch and Day Use Facilities Environmental Assessment*. Briefly, those alternatives were:

Alternative 1 (No Action). This alternative proposed no change from the current management direction for the Lake Camp boat launching area. The following facilities would continue to be maintained on-site: an informal gravel parking area accommodating 4-5 vehicles; an access road leading to a steep (17-degree slope), informal, boat launching ramp; and a 70-foot, year-round floating dock.

Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative). Under this alternative, the Lake Camp boat launching area would be upgraded to include an improved boat ramp, parking and turnaround area, two docks, picnic tables, a double-vault toilet, and a fuel containment pad. The parking spaces would be located approximately 130 feet from the river. A 14-foot wide one way loop road would be provided for access. A foot trail would connect the parking and the launch area, and another foot trail would connect the picnic tables and the parking area. The boat launch ramp would have a low-angle slope into the river.

Alternative 3 (Locate Parking on River Edge). The basic components of the project under Alternative 3 would be identical to the components described under Alternative 2, but they would be configured differently. The parking lot would be located along the edge of the water and at the same elevation as the river, and this is the main configuration difference. The road would be 24-feet wide with two-way traffic. It would descend to the north and make a switchback to the parking spaces, which would be configured the same as the proposed action. The picnic tables would be located next to the parking area and

immediately adjacent to the river. There would be no trails. The slope of the boat ramp would be the same as described for the proposed action.

ALTERNATIVE SELECTED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The NPS has selected Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative) for implementation, with minor modifications (see attached errata for details).

MITIGATION

Impact minimization and avoidance measures would be implemented as a part of the selected alternative.

Best management practices. Best management practices for watershed protection would include the following:

- Every effort would be made to construct the ramp and docks when the river levels were low and the site relatively dry to avoid impacts to juvenile salmon and rainbow trout from water turbidity and sedimentation. If this was not possible and the ramp and dock had to be constructed when river levels were high, the contractor would install a temporary cofferdam around the construction site. Water would be pumped out from inside the dam to create a relatively dry working environment and minimize sedimentation in the river.
- In general, the contractor would use bio-logs, silt fence, or similar measures as appropriate, to reduce the amount of sediment in runoff from reaching the river.
- Once construction was completed, remaining exposed soils would be actively revegetated where necessary to help anchor the soils and prevent erosion.
- In addition, no fuel would be stored on the site during construction.
- Following construction, the NPS would cordon off an area adjacent to the river to promote the establishment of a vegetative buffer.

Wetland Compensation. A minimum of 2.1 acres of wetlands would be restored in the Dry Bay area of Glacier Bay National Preserve to compensate for wetlands impacted at Lake Camp (see attached "Wetlands Statement of Findings" in Appendix 2 for more information). Although vegetation would be cleared to ground-level within the 0.4 acres of wetland used for topsoil storage, the organic layer would remain intact. Heavy equipment would likely be used to deposit and remove the topsoil, but would not be stored or staged within this area. The topsoil would be stabilized with filtration bales, filter cloth, or other appropriate means to prevent re-entry into the waterway or wetland. Topsoil storage would be for as short a time as possible to prevent loss of seed and root viability, loss of organic matter, and degradation of the soil microbial community. Once stored topsoil were removed, this wetland area would be left at pre-existing elevations, and soil, hydrology, and native vegetation communities would be restored through natural processes.

Sanitation Facilities. A centrally located toilet and bear-proof trash containers would be placed at the site to reduce potential impacts of human waste and litter and prevent bears and other wildlife from obtaining discarded human food or garbage.

Educational Information. Educational information would be provided at the on-site kiosks to inform visitors of appropriate behavior around wildlife and in sensitive environments such as riparian areas, to promote safe and environmentally responsible boating and use of the boat launch facilities, and to notify visitors of fishing regulations.

Construction Scheduling. The contractor would be required to accommodate launching or retrieving of the M/V *Ketivik* by the NPS if the private ramp was determined to be unavailable or unusable for this purpose.

Cultural Resources Protection. There are no known prehistoric or historic resources in the project area. However, should unknown resources be uncovered during implementation, work would be stopped in the discovery area, and the NPS would consult the Alaska Department of Natural Resources State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) in accordance with 36 CFR 800.11 and, as appropriate, provisions of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1992, regarding the appropriate action to take. Any artifacts recovered from park property at Lake Camp would be managed in compliance with NPS-28. NPS archeologists would monitor construction on an opportunistic basis.

Hydrology. The contractor would study the hydrology of the river in an attempt to find the optimum placement of docks and boat ramp given the river current and the range of boat types expected to use the facilities.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

As documented in the EA, the NPS has determined the proposed action can be implemented with no significant adverse effect to soils, vegetation, fish and essential fish habitat, wildlife, air quality, water quality, wetlands, the visitor experience, the local community, park management, subsistence, or minority and low-income populations and communities. The environmental effects of the proposed action are summarized below (these impacts have been adjusted to reflect the changes made to the proposed action). For a complete analysis, refer to the *Lake Camp Boat Launching and Day Use Facilities Environmental Assessment*.

- About 700 cy of soil would be permanently gained due to the construction of the proposed alternative. Impacts related to soil erosion and compaction would be minor overall, lasting primarily during construction. The lower grade of constructed surfaces and greater permeability of exposed surfaces would minimize erosion of the finished facilities. Together, these would mean minor soil impacts.
- About 1.5 acres of existing vegetation would be permanently lost. These impacts would be minor overall, because similar vegetation exists in a vast area nearby.
- Approximately 2,500 square feet (sq. ft.) of rainbow trout and sockeye salmon spawning habitat would be permanently lost, and another 6,000 sq. ft temporarily disturbed. Approximately 500 lineal feet of river bank rearing habitat for juvenile salmon, rainbow trout, and other fish species would be affected, with a permanent loss of about 200 feet. Best management practices would be followed during construction to decrease sedimentation impacts to juvenile salmonids and incubating eggs. Impacts would be minor because the entire construction area is small.
- The preferred alternative would result in the permanent loss 1.5 acres of vegetated wildlife habitat plus functional loss of about 0.1 acre of riverine wetland area sometimes used as a wildlife corridor. Impacts would be minor either because they would be temporary construction impacts or because the habitat permanently lost would be small in relation to surrounding habitat.
- Dust and engine exhaust from vehicles using the new Lake Camp facilities could minimally impact local air quality for short periods. During construction, heavy equipment could increase the amount of dust and vehicular exhaust, causing minor impacts to local air quality.
- Soil erosion resulting from removing vegetation and from construction activities would decrease water quality at minor levels during construction (no more than eight weeks). Incidental discharges of pollutants from Lake Camp users would continue, a minor and perpetual impact during the ice-free season. Best management practices used during construction would minimize erosion and sedimentation impacts to water quality.

- Approximately 0.8 acres of wetlands would be permanently lost. Another 0.4 acres would be temporarily impacted during construction, but would be expected to naturally regain its wetland function following the completion of construction and the removal of stored organic material.
- Visitor experience would be enhanced with the construction of the Lake Camp area. Visitors who want improved access and conveniences would benefit from decreased road grades, formalized parking area, restrooms, picnic table, informational kiosk, an additional dock, and ADA accessibility. Congestion and delays on land and in the river would be reduced, beneficially impacting the experience of boaters. Diminished wild character of the area would impact those visitors who prefer Lake Camp to remain as it is. The separation of the parking and launching areas would inconvenience some visitors but not more than visitors are inconvenienced today.
- When complete, the proposed action would possibly offer minor positive long-term effects to the local community by providing easier access to Naknek Lake and River for residents and commercial operators and by inducing greater recreational and commercial opportunities. Construction would also offer short-term positive affect on the local economy by providing possible housing, job, and material opportunities for the surrounding area but could cause temporary inconvenience while the area was closed for 6-8 weeks.
- Park management efforts and costs would increase slightly with need for maintenance of the new facilities. The fueling, launching and removal operations of the park boat likely would be easier and more cost effective, a moderate benefit.
- Cumulative effects of implementing the proposed action in addition to the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions within the Lake Camp area would be minor additions of the same kinds of impacts described in other subsections of this chapter for all impact topics.

The proposed action complies with the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and Executive Orders 11988 and 11990. 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 proposed action 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 on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.9), an environmental impact statement will not be prepared for the project.

Recommended: _____

Superintendent, Katmai National Park and Preserve

8/24/2000
Date

Approved: _____

Regional Director, Alaska

8/28/00
Date

ERRATA
Environmental Assessment
Lake Camp Boat Launch and Day Use Facilities
Katmai National Park and Preserve
August, 2000

MINOR MODIFICATIONS TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The design of the boat launching facilities has been slightly modified since the *Lake Camp Boat Launch and Day Use Facilities Environmental Assessment* (EA), was distributed to the public on July 15, 2000. These modifications do not affect the finding of no significant impact for the project. The following specific changes have been made to Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative):

Access Road and Parking. The final engineering solution for construction of the road and parking area requires a reduced amount of cut compared to the amount described in the EA. Therefore, only about 6,800 cubic yards (cy) of material will be excavated and exported off-site (the EA originally estimated 12,000 cy). The amount of fill required for the project has been increased from 4,400 cy to 7,500 cy (the actual project footprint will decrease – see below under "vegetation impacts"). Additional changes in the design of the road include enlarging the radius on the curve at the return access drive to the parking lot (north) and/or widening the road section at the curve(s) to better accommodate vehicles. Two culverts will be installed to provide adequate cross-drainage.

Docks and Ramp. The existing dock will be relocated 80 to 90 feet up-river from its current location to maintain a minimum 40-foot water opening between the proposed dock and finger floats of the existing dock. This design, which was described as a possible option in the EA, will accommodate the launching and retrieval of the MV Ketivik each year. An 8-foot wide walk connection will be provided between the re-located dock and the access drive. The ramp will require 65 cy of concrete (the EA originally estimated 50 cy).

Vault Toilet. The vault toilet will be located in the parking area, rather than by the boat ramp and docks to further reduce amount of cut required.

As a result of the modifications to the proposed action, the environmental impact analysis has been slightly revised, as well. These revisions are described below (the numbers in parentheses are the original quantity estimates provided in the EA). Except for these revisions, the impacts remain as recorded in the EA.

Soils: The construction will permanently displace about 6,800 cy (12,000 cy) of soil and replace it with about 7,500 cy (4,400 cy) of structural backfill. There will be a permanent gain of about 700 cy of soils on the site (as opposed to a permanent loss of 7,600 cy as originally estimated in the EA). Soil on the north end of the project area will be compacted as a result of storing the approximately 1,150 cy (4,000 cy) of stripped organic material. Construction activities will expose and compact the soils within about a 1.2-acre area (3.4 acres).

Vegetation: Vegetation will be cut to the ground ("clearing") on 2.0 acres (3.4 acres). The organic layer also will be removed ("grubbing"), on 1.2 acres of this 2.0-acre cleared area (grubbing originally occurred on 3.4 acres). Stripped organic materials will be used to

restore 1.0 acre (2.2 acres) of the denuded area once construction was complete. Because fill will be placed on top of some of the areas that cleared, the vegetation underneath will be smothered. This action, combined with grubbing 1.2 acres, will result in a total of about 1.5 acres (1.2 acres) of the site remaining unvegetated over the long-term. Approximately 0.4 acres (0.9 acre) on the north end of the project will not have the organic layer removed, but will be used for stockpiling the stripped organic layer.

Fish and Essential Fish Habitat: Because of the location of the boat ramp (outside of the docks), about 6,000 square feet (4,200 s.f.) of riverbank and in-water habitat could be degraded by boats and humans.

Wildlife: Approximately 1.5 acres (1.2 acres) of vegetation that serves as wildlife habitat will be permanently removed. In addition, about 0.4 acres (0.9 acre) of heath tundra wetlands will be unavailable to wildlife for 6-8 weeks while the area was used to store organic material.

Wetlands: A total of 0.8 acres (1.2 acres) of wetlands will be permanently lost. Although this area will no longer be classified as wetlands, the replacement of organic soil – about 110 cy (1,300 cy) – on about 0.2 acres (0.7 acres) of these wetlands should encourage the return of indigenous plant species. Approximately 700 cy (2,400 cy) of wetlands will be excavated, and approximately 3,150 cy (1,400 cy) of imported structural material will be placed in these wetlands at the site. In addition to permanent wetland impacts, about 0.4 acres (0.9 acre) of heath tundra wetlands will be temporarily impacted to provide on-site storage of about 1,150 cy (4,000 cy) of organic materials during the 6-8 week construction period.

NPS RESPONSE TO SUBSTANTIVE PUBLIC COMMENTS

A 30-day public comment period was provided for the *Lake Camp Boat Launch and Day Use Facilities Environmental Assessment* (EA), from July 15 through August 13, 2000. Comments were received from the Lake and Peninsula Borough, the Alaska Division of Governmental Coordination, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, the U.S. Department of the Air Force, the National Parks and Conservation Association, and three individuals. Substantive comments and NPS responses are provided below (substantive comments are those which modify the existing alternatives, propose new alternatives not previously considered, supplement, improve, or modify the impact analysis, or make factual corrections). Only the U.S. Air Force made substantive comments; however, none of these comments changed the EA's conclusions about the effect of the proposed action or other alternatives.

U.S. Department of the Air Force

Comment 1: The EA does not indicate how roads will be maintained and graded during the project hauling and construction.

Response 1: Protection of existing vegetation, structures, equipment, utilities, and improvements is covered by FARR 52.236-09, which is included in the NPS contract with the company that will be constructing the proposed facilities. These provisions describe the contractor's responsibility for damages on third party property.

Comment 2: The EA does not address the issue of docks (i.e., are they permanent, will they be removed in winter, where will they be stored, etc.).

Response 2: The EA notes on page 6 (1st bullet under the description of Alternative 2), that the docks will be permanent.

Comment 3: On page 5 of the EA ("Cultural Resources"), the statement that "historic resources were demolished by the U.S. Air Force and, have, therefore, been determined ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places," is erroneous. While some cold war buildings at King Salomon were proposed for historic preservation, the recreational camps have never been proposed.

Response 3: The NPS stands by its statement. As part of an earlier project, the NPS formally submitted a determination of eligibility for the Lake Camp property; however, this determination was turned down because the property was found ineligible due to lack of integrity (i.e., it no longer existed).

Comment 4: On page 10 of the EA ("Hydrology"), the NPS noted that the "contractor would study the hydrology of the river in an attempt to find the optimum placement of docks and boat ramp given the river current and the range of boat types expected to use the facilities." Based upon the critical nature of a proposed boat launch area, the NPS should have proposed, based on Lake Camp's hydrology, the best placement of the boat ramp is at the preferred location - not a study of the location hydrology after the EA is approved.

Response 4: The quoted statement was not meant to imply that the location of the boat ramp and docks is a complete unknown. Rather, a hydrological study would be done to determine where, *within the general area indicated on the site plan for the preferred alternative* (Figure 2), the ramp and boat docks would be located. Specifically, the study would help determine the angle at which the boat docks and ramp would be constructed (i.e., perpendicular to or angled with the river current). The study also would be used to check the EA assumption that little excavation and grading of the river bottom would be needed to construct the ramp.

Mr. Samuel J. Fortier, Fortier & Mikko

Comment 1: One aspect of subsistence use that the Assessment did not evaluate is the impact that an increase of visitors might have on fish and animal resources. The report does mention that there is a potential for increased pressure in its discussion of the project's impact on fish and wildlife resources. Will the Environmental impact statement address this question in more depth?

Response 1: As stated on page 4 of the ANILCA Section 810 Subsistence Evaluation, lands and waters within Katmai National Park are closed to Title VIII subsistence uses...Becharof National Wildlife Refuge is the closest Federal public land to the project site where Title VIII subsistence is allowed. Page 4 of the ANILCA Section 810 Subsistence Evaluation also notes that no actions under the alternatives presented are expected to significantly redistribute or significantly impact fish or wildlife populations. Both direct and indirect impacts of the alternatives on subsistence resources are addressed by this statement. This analysis is supported by the EA itself which concludes that increased numbers of people accessing Naknek River would be unlikely to have adverse impacts to fish populations (page 23) and that all of the wildlife impacts resulting from the proposed action would be minor (page 27). Based on these findings, there is no need to further address whether the potential for increased pressure will indirectly impact fish and wildlife or other subsistence resources.

Comment 2: Since the project estimates that it will bring more people into the area, it seems to us it would make sense for the Park Service not only to look at whether asbestos is at the site, but also to work with the Department of Defense to come up with a plan to keep people from digging

around on the old Air Force site...Just because the Park Service can't find [asbestos] does not mean that no one else could.

Response 2: NPS approval must be obtained and appropriate compliance procedures followed before any digging can occur on NPS land at Lake Camp. Similar requirements apply on the adjacent U.S. Air Force property. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that asbestos would be found on the site. All visible asbestos has been removed. Samples taken from the recreational structures buried on NPS property at Lake Camp indicate that the structures do not contain asbestos. Based on this information, the NPS has concluded that asbestos is not widespread and does not pose a significant hazard in this area.

Comment 3: With the ability to get fuel trucks right next to the river, there is a greater chance this type of spill (i.e., one where fuel spills directly from the truck due to an accident) will go right into the river. The Assessment does not mention anything about the contingency plans for fuel spills. Has the risk of a fuel spill from a truck or an accident involving a fuel truck been evaluated and will there be a plan and response equipment on hand in case such a spill occurs?

Response 3: The actual risk of a fuel spill has not been evaluated, though given past experience, the risk for such a spill is assumed to be minor. A fuel containment pad that meets Alaska Department of Environment (DEC) design requirements will be built at Lake Camp. If a spill was to occur, it should be contained by the fuel containment pad and would be unlikely to reach the river. In addition, all fuel trucks must comply with DEC requirements regarding fuel spill response equipment. The NPS has a Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure Plan in place and is in the process of preparing a park-wide Facility Response Plan. Both plans address the potential for fuel spills at Lake Camp.