
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve
Alaska



Snipe Lake Cabin Repair Environmental Assessment January 2008



1. PURPOSE AND NEED

The National Park Service (NPS) is proposing to rehabilitate the Snipe Lake Cabin (also called the Willis Cabin) located in Lake Clark National Preserve, outside the wilderness boundary, near Snipe Lake. Snipe Lake is located approximately 30 air miles north of Port Alsworth (Figure 1).

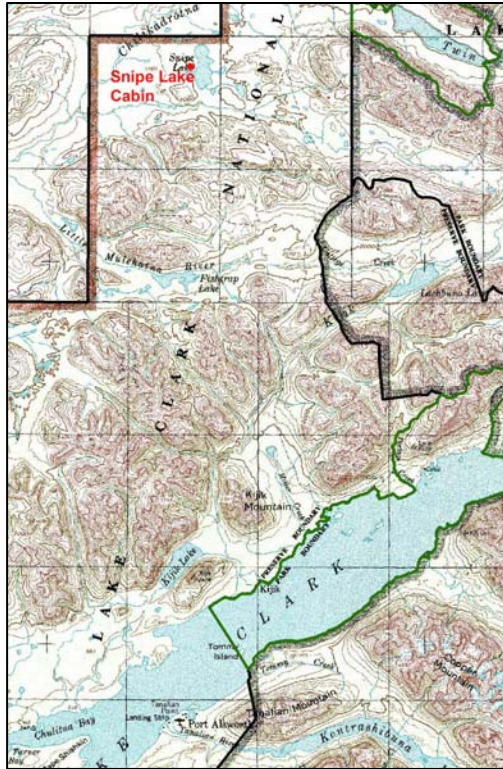


Figure 1. Location of Snipe Lake Cabin.

The cabin was built in the early 1950's, probably as a line cabin for a trap line. The cabin is largely intact and in fair condition, but suffers from decay due to weather, time and animals. It needs immediate stabilization and some reconstruction to prevent complete deterioration. The cabin has been determined eligible, with SHPO concurrence, for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and is listed on the List of Classified Structures. The cabin "...characterizes the Alaska frontier lifestyle and retains its historic integrity" and "...retains a high degree of integrity of association to *Big Game Hunting and Sport Fishing in the Lake Clark Region* historic theme recognized by the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve Historic Resource Study..." (Tobey 2003).

The Snipe Lake cabin is needed for administrative purposes to support hunting patrols and resource monitoring activities in the area, and to maintain the historic integrity of the cabin and the themes of big game hunting and trapping in the Lake Clark region. The deteriorated condition of the cabin roof and some wall logs requires repair to prevent complete decay of the structure. The cabin is slated for refurbishing in the draft Lake Clark Cabin Management Plan (NPS 2006), with details outlined in a stabilization plan (NPS 2005).

The Snipe Lake cabin is ideally located to support park administrative activities in the western edge of the Preserve. Several long-term monitoring sites have been established nearby, including vegetation transects around Snipe Lake, and a weather station to be installed in 2008 on the hill south of the cabin. The Snipe Lake cabin is located on a small side lake immediately west of big Snipe Lake, and the shoreline is a sheltered spot to tie a floatplane overnight. Other cabins in the area include a deteriorated cabin on the south end of big Snipe Lake which is no longer useful for shelter since the front wall has collapsed. A plywood and sheet metal cabin at Sweet Lucy Lake dates to the early 1980's and is not historically significant. A NPS ranger cabin is located on lower Twin Lake. This area is subject to strong winds from channeled terrain to the east and lake waves due to the long fetch of the lake. Snipe Lake provides a safe alternative for overnight floatplane tiedown.

This environmental assessment (EA) analyzes the potential environmental impacts which could result from the alternatives considered, including the No Action alternative. This EA has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, regulations of the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.9), and the

2. DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1: No Action

Under the no-action alternative the Snipe Lake cabin would not be rehabilitated. The NPS would not take any action to stabilize the structure. The cabin would be allowed to naturally decay and collapse. Hunting patrols will use alternative cabins or return to Port Alsworth every night. Monitoring scientists will live in field camps located around the shoreline of Snipe Lake.

Alternative 2: Rehabilitate the Snipe Lake cabin (NPS Preferred Alternative)

The Snipe Lake cabin is a 12 ft. by 13 ft. structure with an extended porch on the south side. The NPS proposes to replace the sill and wall logs which are rotten or porcupine-chewed, replace the ridge beams and roofing, build a wood floor, restore the door and fit the windows with glass and install a wood stove. The sill and walls would need up to 25 logs 6 to 8 inches in diameter at the butt end and 16 to 18 feet long. The ridgepole is a larger log (10 inch butt diameter) and would be 20 ft. long. Treated boards (2 ft. x 12 ft.) would be installed below the sill logs to prolong the life of the cabin. The roof would be recovered with imported slabs or treated 2X boards, insulated and covered with aluminum sheets to match the original newsprint sheets. The subfloor would be constructed of treated boards and insulated, and covered with 1 inch flooring. The door would be reconstructed and glass windows installed in existing frames. A wood stove and chimney would be installed, following manufacturer's clearance requirements. An outhouse would be constructed behind the cabin. A pit approximately one meter square and deep would be dug and a small frame outhouse built over it.



Figure 2. Overview of project area, looking northeast. Photo taken Feb. 14, 2007.

Logs for the walls and ridgepole would be cut locally and skidded to the cabin site in the winter when adequate snow cover exists to protect the vegetation. The proposed timber site is in a small cove about 1.5 km southwest of the cabin site. The proposed timber skidding route would be above the small drainage to the lake shore, thence across the ice to the beach below the cabin (Figure 2). Logs would be cut from an open stand of white spruce located about 1.5 km to the southwest and stockpiled by the cabin to dry before construction.

All stumps would be cut flush with the ground surface and the slash scattered through the stand. Trees would be selected from throughout the stand to avoid the appearance of a clearcut. Chain saws, axes, and snow machines would be used during the timbering operation. Up to 25 mature white spruce would be cut, although it may be possible to get two wall logs from some trees. Materials for the roofing and floor would be flown into the site with fixed wing planes. These materials would be stockpiled around the cabin during the construction phase. Timber harvest (winter) and cabin reconstruction (summer) should take less than a week in the winter and about three weeks during summer.

The cabin would likely be used by ranger patrols up to one week during hunting season, and another one to two weeks during summer months by scientists collecting data from plots and maintaining the weather station.

3. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The Snipe Lake trapping cabin is located about 50 feet above the lake shore on a small lake directly west of Snipe Lake proper (Figure 3). These lakes are nestled in gently rolling terrain remaining from Pleistocene glacial advances. Rounded balds north and south of the lake rise about 300' above the cabin site at 1800'. Scattered open and woodland white spruce grow in the willow/dwarf birch and ericaceous tundra from Snipe Lake west. The tops of the balds support ericaceous dwarf shrub tundra. East of Snipe Lake, the trees become very sparse and the country is vegetated with communities of low shrub and ericaceous dwarf shrub tundra with scattered ponds and gravel patches (Figure 4).

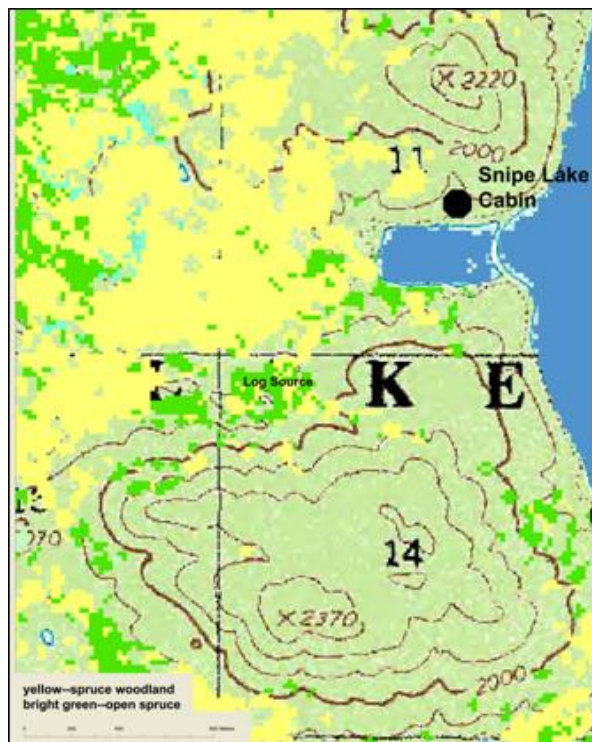


Figure 3. Location of Snipe Lake Cabin and surrounding area. Spruce types are shown in yellow and bright green on the 1:63,360 USGS topo map.

The vegetation immediately around the cabin is predominately low shrub /ericaceous tundra with scattered white spruce (Figure 4). Denser stands of white spruce grow in protected niches nearby. The cabin site is well drained, probably on glacial/alluvial deposits. Wolf tracks were noted during a site visit in Feb 2007. The area likely supports red squirrels, microtines, jays, ravens, chickadees and traveling canids. Bear, moose, and caribou may visit the area during summer months.

The cabin location is within eligible wilderness. These lands are considered eligible for wilderness designation by Congress, based on the wilderness suitability reviews conducted in compliance with ANILCA Section 1317(a) and included in the park General Management Plan. The full wilderness review process required under ANILCA section 1317(b) has not been completed on those eligible lands.

Although an EIS was completed for LACL Wilderness proposals (NPS 1988), no final action was taken by the Secretary of Interior and a record of decision was not published in the Federal Register. This leaves this eligible wilderness acreage managed under NPS policies that protect wilderness character until Congress can act. By policy, the term “wilderness” includes the



Figure 4. View of Snipe Lake cabin from lakeshore. Note sparse spruce and low shrub vegetation. Photo taken Feb. 14, 2007.

categories of eligible, study, proposed, recommended and potential, as well as designated. In policy, “the NPS will take no action that would diminish the wilderness eligibility of an area possessing wilderness characteristics until the legislative process of wilderness designation has been completed.” (NPS Mts. Policies, Ch. 6.3.1, 2006). This included use of the minimum requirements concept regardless of wilderness category.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

4.1 Alternative 1: No Action:

No impacts would accrue to any park natural resources under the No Action Alternative. NPS would not conduct any stabilization or repairs to the cabin, and it would quickly collapse and decay into the underbrush. No spruce trees would be cut and there would be no short-term noise from workers using chain saws and snowmachines.

This alternative would result in the loss of a historically significant structure which represents the big game hunting and trapping themes of the Lake Clark region. The Sweet Lucy cabin may be used more for hunting patrols, likely resulting in upgrades to a non-historic cabin and continuing impacts to the scenic character of the region. The Sweet Lucy cabin is covered with metal sheeting and stands in a sparse stand of spruce, so it is visible from some distance, especially from the south. Hunting patrols will be more likely to return to Port Alsworth than overnight at Lower Twin in windy weather, resulting in a loss of patrol effectiveness and some additional aircraft flights. Field camps for monitoring crews may result in hardened campsites near the shore of Snipe Lake.

4.2 Alternative 2 (Rehabilitate the Snipe Lake Cabin (NPS Preferred Alternative))

Vegetation: The main impact would be the removal of up to 25 mature white spruce trees from a stand southwest of the cabin site. This is a healthy stand of several acres with multi-age trees. The harvested trees would be replaced as saplings grow to mature size within 20-30 years. The ground cover would not be impacted as the skidding operation would be conducted during winter with adequate snow cover to protect the vegetation.

Wildlife: There may be temporary displacement of wildlife due to noise and human activities during the timber harvest (winter) and cabin construction (summer). This activity should take less than a week in winter and about three weeks during summer. When the project is finished, human activity would be returned to low levels and wildlife would resume their normal patterns.

Soils: There would be no damage to soils on the timber skid route (frozen and snow covered) or to the area around the cabin. The cabin sits in a small clearing (approximately 6 ft. around the sides and back, up to 12 ft. in front) where soils are already compacted. No further disturbance to soils would occur during this project. Monitoring scientists would use the cabin as a base for data collection and site maintenance, so would not be establishing hardened campsites around the shoreline of Snipe Lake.

Wetlands and Riparian areas: No wetlands or riparian zones would be impacted during this work. The timber skid route is above the riparian zone of the small drainage into the lake. The logs would be moved across the lake shore vegetation during winter when the ground and vegetation is ice and snow covered. During summer, the cabin would be accessed via an existing trail from the lake shore.

Soundscape: There would be minor short-term noise from chain saws, aircraft, snow machines and construction crews during the timber harvest and construction phases. The noise would continue at varying levels for a maximum total of four weeks. There would be no long-term noise impacts from the project beyond normal operations in the Park.

Air Quality: There may be short-term minimal impacts to local air quality from chain saws and snowmachines. There would be no long-term impacts to air quality.

Wilderness: The cabin is located outside of designated Wilderness (Figure 1) but within eligible wilderness. There would be negligible effects to the wilderness character, consisting of the qualities of undeveloped, untrammeled, naturalness, and opportunity for solitude or unconfined recreation. The cabin is already present on the landscape and its rehabilitation would not change the naturalness or untrammeled character of the area. The Snipe Lake Cabin existed at the time neighboring lands were designated as wilderness, and as such contributed to the conditions that define the minimum standards for Wilderness in the park. Though located in eligible Wilderness, improvements to the cabin would threaten Wilderness only if the changes or future uses changed to a degree that they threaten to reduce the natural and solitude qualities of the wilderness area. Such a degree of change is not envisioned or anticipated by either alternative. The proposed use of the facility for hunting patrols and research support would minimally increase the human presence on the lake during summer and fall, which may be a minor effect on the opportunity for solitude during short periods. Once staff and visitors become aware that the cabin has been rehabilitated, there may be some increased use of the area with the cabin as a focal point. The overall impact to wilderness character of this eligible wilderness area would be negligible.

Cultural Resources: There are no known archeological resources in the vicinity of the Snipe Lake cabin or the timber harvest area. The cabin itself is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The site of the pit for the outhouse would be cleared by a cultural resource specialist. All work would be conducted under the supervision of a historical architect to ensure that the historical integrity of the cabin and surroundings is maintained. This project would ensure the preservation of an example of a line cabin from the mid-twentieth century.

Cumulative Effects: Under Alternative 2 (the Proposed Action), there would be minimal cumulative impacts to the natural resources of the region. Cutting 25 white spruce trees would have negligible effects on the stand of spruce of several hundred acres. The stand is healthy with many young trees that would grow to fill in the loss of mature trees. The area would receive more human use due to NPS administrative activities and possibly additional park visitors. Cumulative human use is projected to be less than 20 nights occupancy per year. The cumulative effects to wilderness character include this rehabilitated cabin, the presence of a permanent weather monitoring station up the hill from the Snipe Lake cabin, as well as 42 other cabins and 11 communications or weather monitoring facilities in the park and preserve. The cumulative effects of all facilities have a minor cumulative impact on wilderness character. The cumulative impacts to the cultural resources would be to preserve a trapping line cabin representative of the big game hunting and trapping historic themes of the Lake Clark region.

Conclusion: Alternative 2 would have a minimal effect on the Preserve's natural resources while ensuring preservation of a line cabin from the mid-twentieth century. The level of impact to natural resources from Alternative 2 would not result in impairment of park resources that fulfill specific purposes identified in the enabling legislations or that are essential to the natural and cultural integrity of the parks.

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APPENDIX A

Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act (ANILCA), Section 810(a) Summary Evaluations and Findings

I. INTRODUCTION

This section was prepared to comply with Title VIII, Section 810 of the Alaska National Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). It summarizes the evaluations of potential restrictions to subsistence uses that could result from the proposed action by the National Park Service (NPS) to rehabilitate a backcountry cabin located at Snipe Lake in Lake Clark National Preserve.

II. EVALUATION PROCESS

Section 810(a) states:

“In determining whether to withdraw, reserve, lease, or otherwise permit the use, occupancy, or disposition of public lands...the head of the federal agency...over such lands...shall evaluate the effect of such use, occupancy, or disposition on subsistence uses and needs, the availability of other lands for the purposes sought to be achieved, and other alternatives which would reduce or eliminate the use, occupancy or disposition of such lands which would significantly restrict subsistence uses shall be effected until the head of such Federal agency—

- (1) gives notice to the appropriate State agency and the appropriate local committees and regional councils established pursuant to Section 805;
- (2) gives notice of, and holds, a hearing in the vicinity of the area involved; and
- (3) determines that (A) such a significant restriction of subsistence uses is necessary, consistent with sound management principles for the utilization of the public lands, (B) the proposed activity will involve the minimal amount of public lands necessary...and (C) reasonable steps will be taken to minimize adverse impacts upon subsistence uses and resources resulting from such actions.”

When Congress passed ANILCA in 1980, it expanded the national park system in Alaska by creating new parks, monuments and preserves and making additions to existing units. In establishing these new park areas, ANILCA Title II states the purposes for which Congress created each unit and the outlines the human uses and activities that may be permitted. ANILCA Title II Section 201(7)(a) states the following purposes for Lake Clark National Park and Preserve:

“To protect the watershed necessary for perpetuation of the red salmon fishery in Bristol Bay; to maintain unimpaired the scenic beauty and quality of portions of the Alaska Range and the Aleutian Range, including active volcanoes, glaciers, wild rivers, lakes, waterfalls, and alpine meadows in their natural state; and to protect habitat for and populations of fish and wildlife including but not limited to caribou, Dall sheep, brown/grizzly bears, bald eagles, and peregrine falcons... Subsistence uses by local residents shall be permitted in the park where such uses are traditional in accordance with the provisions of Title VIII.”

ANILCA Section 810 (a) further requires that the potential for significant restriction of subsistence uses by a proposed action be evaluated on “...the availability of other lands for the purposes sought to be achieved and other alternatives which would reduce or eliminate the use, occupancy, or disposition of public lands needed for subsistence purposes.”

III. PROPOSED ACTION ON FEDERAL PUBLIC LANDS

The NPS proposes to stabilize and repair an existing backcountry cabin located at Snipe Lake in Lake Clark National Preserve. Construction activities will include replacing rotten and damaged sill and wall logs, replacing ridge beams and roofing, building a wood floor, restoring the cabin door, installing new windows and a wood stove. Logs for the walls and ridgepole will be locally harvested and skidded to the cabin site in the winter when adequate snow cover exists to protect the vegetation. The proposed timber site is located in a small cove approximately 1.5 km southwest of the cabin site. The proposed skidding route would be above the small drainage to the lake shore, across the ice to the beach below the cabin.

IV. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve is located in southcentral Alaska adjacent to Cook Inlet and was established in 1980 by Title II Section 201(7) of ANILCA. Subsistence uses are allowed within Lake Clark National Park and Preserve in accordance with Title II, Section 201(1) and Title VIII of ANILCA.

Section 803 of ANILCA defines subsistence uses as: “the customary and traditional uses by rural Alaska residents of wild, renewable resources for direct personal or family consumption as food, shelter, fuel, clothing, tools, or transportation; for the making and selling of handicraft articles out of non-edible by-products of fish and wildlife resources taken for personal or family consumption; for barter, or sharing for personal or family consumption; and for customary trade.”

In accordance with Title 36 CFR Part 13 regulations, residents of the NPS designated resident zone communities of Iliamna, Lime Village, Newhalen, Nondalton, Pedro Bay and Port Alsworth are qualified to engage in subsistence uses within Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. Local rural residents who do not live in these communities, but who have customarily and traditionally engaged in subsistence activities within the park and preserve may continue to do so with a subsistence use permit issued by the park superintendent.

Major resources used for subsistence by resident zone communities include caribou, brown bear, moose, beaver, Dall sheep, snowshoe hare, fox, lynx, mink, wolf, wolverine, ptarmigan, waterfowl, otter, marine mammals, salmon, trout, Dolly Varden, grayling, pike, suckers, humpback and round whitefish, halibut, crab, clams, berries, wild edible plants, and wood.

Located in Game Management Units (GMU) 9A, 9B, 16B, 17B and 19B, Lake Clark National Park (which encompasses 2,439,000 acres) and Preserve (which encompasses 1,214,000 acres) contain exceptional geologic features, scenery, wildlife, and cultural landscapes. These GMUs also include other federal public lands such BLM administered lands in 9B, 16B and 17B; the Denali National Park and Preserve in 16B; and the Upper Mulchatna Controlled Use Area in 17B.

The proposed action on Snipe Lake is located in the Bristol Bay Area, GMU 17B, in the Mulchatna River drainage within the boundaries of Lake Clark National Preserve. Federal subsistence fishery regulations currently allow residents of the Iliamna-Lake Clark drainage in the Naknek-Kvichak District to subsistence fish for salmon and other freshwater fish for customary and traditional uses. Federal game regulations for GMU 17B allow residents to harvest black bears, brown bears, caribou, Dall sheep, moose, coyotes, red and arctic fox, lynx, wolves, wolverine, beavers, hares, grouse and ptarmigan for subsistence uses.

The following annual harvest figures are from subsistence resource harvest surveys conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in the resident zone communities of Iliamna, Newhalen, Pedro Bay, Port Alsworth and Nondalton in 2004.

SUBSISTENCE RESOURCE	ILIAMNA	NEWHALEN	PEDRO BAY	PORT ALSWORTH	NONDALTON
Bears	0 animals	4 animals	0 animals	1 animal	6 animals
Moose	3 animals	9 animals	4 animals	1 animal	17 animals
Caribou	3 animals	50 animals	1 animal	7 animals	18 animals
Dall sheep	0 animals	0 animals	0 animals	7 animals	0 animals
Small Land Mammals	17 animals	63 animals	5 animals	91 animals	257 animals
Migratory Birds	81 birds	605 birds	11 birds	85 birds	268 birds
Other Birds	152 birds	190 birds	110 birds	160 birds	321 birds
Bird Eggs	355 eggs	3018 eggs	417 eggs	0 eggs	0 eggs
Salmon	6879 fish	16714 fish	4346 fish	2250 fish	9045 fish
Other Fish	2478 fish	2994 fish	642 fish	767 fish	4342 fish
Berries	356 gallons	796 gallons	98 gallons	116 gallons	667 gallons
Plants	8 gallons	142 gallons	21 gallons	4 gallons	87 gallons
Firewood	5 cords	111 cords	105 cords	70 cords	137 cords
Houselogs				120 logs	

Annual subsistence harvest in may vary considerably from one year to the next due to spatial and temporal factors and natural causes such as weather, climate change and natural population cycles. The primary species taken for subsistence are moose, caribou, fish (primarily sockeye salmon) and berries. The overall subsistence pattern of the five resident zones surveyed by ADF&G in 2004 is represented below in pounds harvested annually and by percentage of subsistence resources harvested.

<u>Edible Subsistence Resource</u>	<u>Pounds/Year</u>	<u>Percentage of Resources Harvested</u>
Bears	972	.5
Moose	18,307	8.6
Caribou	11,862	5.6
Dall Sheep	709	.3
Small Mammals	1,790	.8
Migratory Birds	1,663	.8
Other Birds	654	.3
Salmon	152,774	72.0
Other Fish	14,486	6.8
Berries	8,132	3.8
Plants	1,048	.5
TOTAL	213,428 lbs/yr.	100%

“Bears” include both brown and black bears. “Small mammals” include beaver, coyote, ground and red squirrel, land otter, lynx, marten, mink, muskrat, red fox, weasel, wolverine, and wolf. “Migratory birds” include bufflehead, eider, goldeneye, mallard, northern pintail, northern shoveler, wigeons, cranes, geese and swans. “Other birds” include upland game birds such as ptarmigan and grouse. “Salmon” includes all five species of Pacific salmon. “Other fish” includes whitefish, northern pike, longnose suckers, grayling, Dolly Varden, arctic char, rainbow trout, lake trout, and burbot as well as some saltwater fish such as halibut, rockfish and smelt. “Berries” include blueberries, cranberries, salmonberries and other edible species. “Plants” include wild celery, Labrador tea, rose hips and other edible plants. “Firewood” refers to spruce, birch and cottonwood cut into cords for home heating. These wood species, in addition to willows and alders, are also used for crafts. “House logs” are primarily white spruce.

Studies of subsistence use in the area include: Final Environmental Statement for the Proposed Lake Clark National Park (NPS); the park general management plan; Resource Use and Subsistence in the Vicinity of the Proposed Lake Clark National Park (Behnke 1978); Subsistence Production and Exchange in the Iliamna Lake Region, Southwest Alaska, 1982-1983 (Morris 1983); Land Use and Economy of Lime Village (Russell-Kari 1983); Lake Clark National Park and Preserve: Historic Uses of Cook Inlet Natural Resources (McNabb and Petrivelli 1992); Subsistence Uses of Vegetal Resources In and Around Lake Clark National Park and Preserve (Johnson et. al. 1998), Community Profile Database (Alaska Department of Fish and Game Subsistence Division 2001), Subsistence Harvests and Uses of Wild Resources in Iliamna, Newhalen, Nondalton, Pedro Bay and Port Alsworth, Alaska, 2004 (ADF&G, 2006) and subsistence houselog permit information.

V. SUBSISTENCE USES AND NEEDS EVALUATION

To determine the potential impact on subsistence activities, three evaluation criteria were analyzed relative to current subsistence resources that could be impacted.

The evaluation criteria are:

1. The potential to reduce important subsistence fish and wildlife populations by (a) reductions in abundance; (b) redistribution of subsistence resources; or (c) loss of habitat.
2. Potential impacts the action may have on access for subsistence hunters and fishermen
3. The potential for the action to increase competition among hunters and fishermen for subsistence resources.

1. The potential to reduce populations:

There should be no significant reductions in populations of subsistence fish and wildlife resources as a result of the proposed cabin rehabilitation. The proposed action will result in the loss of up to 25 spruce trees that will be used to replace rotten and damaged wall and sill logs. Construction and related activities may also result in the loss of some willows, alders, berry bushes and other vegetation in the immediate vicinity of the cabin site. However, this should have no impact on the availability, quality and overall abundance of habitat important to plants, animals and fish utilized for subsistence.

The Snipe Lake cabin site is located in a remote area of Lake Clark National Preserve and not in close proximity to any resident zone community. The occasional subsistence hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering activities that occur in the vicinity of the cabin sites should not be adversely affected.

The proposed cabin rehabilitation is not expected to alter subsistence habitats or result in any measurable reduction in or redistribution of wildlife or other subsistence resources. Provisions of ANILCA, the Federal Subsistence Program, and NPS regulations provide tools for adequate protection of fish and wildlife populations within Lake Clark National Park and Preserve while ensuring a subsistence priority for local rural residents. In addition, the superintendent may enact closures and/or restrictions if necessary to protect subsistence opportunities or to assure the continued viability of a particular fish or wildlife population.

2. Restriction of Access:

All rights of access for subsistence harvest on NPS lands are granted by Section 811 of ANILCA. Lake Clark National Park and Preserve are managed according to legislative mandates, NPS management policies and guidelines within the approved LACL General Management Plan. The proposed action to rehabilitate the backcountry cabin at Snipe Lake is not expected to limit or restrict the access of subsistence users to natural resources within the park or preserve. The superintendent may enact closures and/or restrictions if necessary to protect subsistence opportunities or to assure the continued viability of a particular fish or wildlife population.

3. Increase in Competition:

The proposed rehabilitation of the Snipe Lake cabin is not expected to result in increased competition for fish, wildlife or other resources that would significantly impact subsistence users. NPS regulations and provisions of ANILCA mandate that if and when it is necessary to restrict taking of fish or wildlife, subsistence users will be given a priority over other user groups. Continued implementation of the ANILCA provisions should mitigate any increased competition from resource users other than subsistence users. The superintendent may enact closures and/or restrictions if necessary to protect subsistence opportunities or to assure the continued viability of a particular fish or wildlife population.

VI. AVAILABILITY OF OTHER LANDS

The proposed action is site-specific to the existing backcountry cabin at Snipe Lake. Since there are no other land inholdings available within the project areas, no other lands are suitable for the project. The proposed action is consistent with NPS mandates and the General Management Plan and is not expected to impact subsistence uses. Subsistence users also utilize other Federal, State and private lands within the region for subsistence activities.

VII. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

A “no action alternative” to preserve the status quo and continue the non-maintenance of the existing cabin at Snipe Lake was considered in preparing this analysis. This alternative was rejected in favor of the proposed action alternative because it did not improve the condition and safety of the structure to maintain a habitable shelter for park staff and back country travelers. It also did not provide protection for the Snipe Lake cabin as an historic structure. No other alternatives were considered in this analysis since the proposed action is both site and project-specific.

VIII. FINDINGS

This analysis concludes that the proposed action would not result in a significant restriction of subsistence uses.

Appendix B: Snipe Lake Cabin Rehab EA



LAKE CLARK NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS DECISION GUIDE

“ . . . except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this Act...”

– the Wilderness Act, 1964

Step 1: Determine if any administrative action is necessary.

Description: Briefly describe the situation that may prompt action.

A trapper's cabin constructed in the 1950's is badly deteriorated due to time, weather and animals and is in need of stabilization and some reconstruction to prevent complete deterioration. The cabin, located near Snipe Lake, has been determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and is listed on the List of Classified Structures. There is a draft cabin management plan for the park (2006) and this cabin is listed as one of the cabins selected to rehabilitate. It is one of the best remaining examples of a trapper's cabin from its era. The deteriorated condition of the cabin requires repair both to stabilize the structure to preserve its historic value and to serve an administrative function. The rehabilitated cabin is also proposed for use as an administrative cabin for support of hunting patrols during the fall and to support long term natural science research in the area.

To determine if administrative action is necessary, answer the questions listed in A - F on the following pages.

A. Describe Valid Existing Rights or Special Provisions of Wilderness Legislation

Are there valid existing rights or is there a special provision in wilderness legislation (the Wilderness Act of 1964 or subsequent wilderness laws) that allows consideration of action involving Section 4(c) uses? Cite law and section.

Yes: ☒ No: ☐ Not Applicable: ☐

Explain: ANILCA Section 1303(a) provides for cabins existing prior to December 18, 1973 that are not under permit to be used for "official government business". Regulations at 36CFR 13.130 provide for the Superintendent to permit the maintenance of a cabin.

B. Describe Requirements of Other Legislation

Do other laws require action?

Yes: ☒ No: ☐ Not Applicable: ☐

Explain: Other laws require or encourage the protection of significant cultural resources. The National Historic Preservation Act (16 USC 470h-2(a)(1) as amended and Executive Order 13006 (Locating Federal Facilities on Historic Properties) require each federal agency - before acquiring, constructing, or leasing buildings- to use, to the maximum extent feasible, historic properties available to it whenever operationally appropriate and economically prudent. The National Historic Preservation Act also requires each agency to implement alternatives for the adaptive use of historic properties it owns if that will help ensure the properties' preservation.

C. Describe Other Guidance

Does taking action conform to and implement relevant standards and guidelines and direction contained in agency policy, unit and wilderness management plans, species recovery plans, tribal government agreements, state and local government and interagency agreements?

Yes: ☒ No: ☐ Not Applicable: ☐

Explain: LACL has found a compatible use for the Snipe Lake historic structure that, consistent with Management Policy (2006: 5.3.5.4.7), will prevent the deterioration of this structure due to neglect and possibly vandalism. The authority for the use of cabins and other sites of occupancy on conservation system units is contained in Section 1303 of ANILCA.

D. Describe Options Outside of Wilderness

Can this situation be resolved by an administrative activity outside of wilderness?

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

Explain: This cabin is outside designated Wilderness but is located in eligible wilderness. The Snipe Lake Cabin is an unobtrusive one-room log cabin located on the hillside south of a small, unnamed lake immediately west of Snipe Lake. Built in 1950, this cabin reflects fastidious craftsmanship in hand-cut materials and structural details. The style and appearance of the cabin have changed little since the construction of the cabin. The cabin characterizes the Alaska frontier lifestyle and retains its historic integrity. If the cabin is not stabilized soon it will not be salvageable because the roof and sill logs are now in a state of decay and any further delay in stabilization will preclude any re-use of original wall logs. A delay in stabilizing the roof means having to build an entirely new structure, but by acting soon, we can still preserve some of the original logs. The cabin is located in the middle of the most visited portion of the park and is near a flight path from the west toward Lake Clark Pass and as such lends itself to be of service to NPS use. Minimally, Management Policy states that unused significant historic structures should be stabilized and protected through appropriate measures. LACL has elected to rehabilitate this historic cabin for contemporary use to ensure its preservation and to meet operational needs. Other structures near by,

such as the Lucy Lake cabin and the Twin Lakes cabin, are either not historic, not appropriate candidates for rehabilitation, are otherwise occupied at the times of year that use of this cabin is required, or are not workable for logistical reasons.

E. Wilderness Character

Does taking administrative action preserve or impair wilderness character, as described by the qualities listed below?

Untrammeled: **Preserve:** x ☐ **Impair:** ☐

Explain: no—does not change wilderness character

Undeveloped: **Preserve:** x ☐ **Impair:** ☐

Explain: The cabin already exists on the site. Cutting trees to repair the cabin will not change the already developed character of the site

Natural: **Preserve:** x ☐ **Impair:** ☐

Explain: no—does not change wilderness character

Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation:

Preserve: x ☐ **Impair:** ☐

Explain: May have a slight increase in use of the area resulting in a negligible loss of opportunity for solitude. Will not change opportunities for unconfined recreation.

Other unique components that reflect the character of this wilderness:

Preserve: ☐ **Impair:** ☐ **Not Applicable:** x ☐

Explain:

F. Describe Effects to the Public Purposes of Wilderness

Is taking administrative action consistent with the public purposes for wilderness (as stated in Section 4(b) of the Wilderness Act) of recreation, scenic, scientific, education, conservation, and historical use?

Recreation: **Yes:** x ☐ **No:** ☐ **Not Applicable:** ☐

Explain: The cabin will be for administrative use, but could be used in an emergency by recreational users in the area.

Scenic: Yes: x☐ No: ☐ Not Applicable: ☐

Explain: The cabin is well camouflaged in the trees along the lakeshore and rehabilitation will not change it's historic look and character which fit into the wilderness landscape.

Scientific: Yes: x☐ No: ☐ Not Applicable: ☐

Explain: The cabin may be used to support other long term research and monitoring of natural resources which will lead to a better understanding and monitoring of wilderness resources.

Education: Yes: ☐ No: ☐ Not Applicable: x☐

Explain:

Conservation: Yes: x☐ No: ☐ Not Applicable: ☐

Explain: Hunting patrols will ensure compliance with game laws and park regulations which contribute to the conservation of the area.

Historical use: Yes: x☐ No: ☐ Not Applicable: ☐

Explain: The cabin is eligible for the National Register and can also serve a dual function as a historic resource and an administrative resource. Historically the cabin was used for hunting and trapping.

p 1 Decision: Is any administrative action necessary?

Yes: x☐ No: ☐ More information needed: ☐

Explain: If the cabin is not repaired, it will continue to decay into the ground and the park will lose a historical resource and use of the cabin for administrative patrols. Although there are two other cabins in the general area (within 50 miles), the Lucy Lake cabin is not historic and would also need rehabilitation. The Twin Lakes cabin is located too far distant to serve the same administrative function.

If action is necessary, proceed to Step 2 to determine the minimum activity.

Step 2: Determine the minimum activity.

Description of Alternatives

For each alternative, describe what methods and techniques will be used, when the activity will take place, where the activity will take place, what mitigation measures are necessary, and the general effects to the wilderness resource and character.

Alternative # 1 Proposed Action

Description:

The historic cabin will be rehabilitated. Twenty-five spruce trees will be cut to repair cabin. Trees will be cut with a chain saw in winter and skidded to the cabin site with a snowmachine. Repair work will

be conducted during summer when access to the cabin will be via floatplane. Chainsaws will also be used in a limited way during construction work.

Stumps will be cut flush with the ground. After the trees are cut and limbed, branches will be piled over the stumps. This will reduce the visibility from the air and provide habitat for small mammals.

Effects:

Wilderness Character

“Untrammeled”

“Undeveloped”

“Natural”

“Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation”

The untrammeled and natural character of the LACL wilderness will not be affected by this rehabilitation work. The undeveloped character of Snipe Lake is already affected by the presence of the cabin and a weather monitoring station up the hill from the cabin. The rehabilitation work will not affect the undeveloped character of the area any more than present conditions. The silent and solitary character of Snipe Lake will be temporarily affected by human presence during work on the cabin. This will include approximately 1 winter week, and 3 summer weeks which will affect the opportunity for solitude. During those times, impacts to natural sounds will include snowmachine, chain saws and aircraft. At the conclusion of the work, the area will return to its normal wilderness state.

The presence of an additional administrative cabin in the portfolio of the park management staff may cause an increase in use of this area. A well maintained cabin often becomes the focal point of management activities that may have occurred elsewhere or not at all. This may affect the wilderness character of the Snipe Lake area because of additional human presence, but the benefits of management attention and activity in this remote portion of the preserve can serve to balance this seasonal human activity.

Heritage and Cultural Resources

Repair of the cabin will preserve an example of a historic line cabin from the 1950s trapping era. The use of cabins in the Alaska wilderness was a long standing part of the use of these wilderness areas.

Maintaining Traditional Skills

Local employees will have an opportunity to learn and exercise wood working and cabin building skills by repairing the cabin using locally gathered materials. None of the employees currently have training or experience with cross cut saws so those are not proposed for use at this time. Hand tools will be used for work on the cabin whenever possible and use of the chainsaw will be minimized.

Special Provisions--NA

Safety of Visitors, Personnel, and Contractors

All involved personnel will follow park policy and standard safety procedures around chain saws, aircraft and snowmachines.

Economic and Time Constraints—Use of the snowmachine and chain saw will decrease the time necessary to complete the project in both phases (log gathering and cabin rehab) which will limit the time necessary for human work crews to be present at the lake. This will improve the opportunity for solitude over having work crews present for many more weeks at the site.

Additional Wilderness-specific Comparison Criteria--NA

Alternative # <u> 2 </u>—No Action

Description: No action would be taken to preserve the Snipe Lake cabin.

Effects:

Wilderness Character

“Untrammeled”

“Undeveloped”

“Natural”

“Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation”

Under this alternative, there would be no change to the wilderness character of the area. The untrammeled and natural character of the area would be preserved as it is in Alternative 1. The cabin would be allowed to disintegrate under benign neglect and the landscape would slowly recover from the developed affects of the cabin. The permanent weather monitoring station would still exist on the site. The presence of researchers servicing the site on an annual basis and camping on the lakeshore instead of using the cabin would contribute to the development of a campsite along the lakeshore. The opportunity for solitude would be somewhat greater than in Alternative 1.

Heritage and Cultural Resources-- the historical resource would be lost through degradation.

Maintaining Traditional Skills—local employees would not have the opportunity to exercise traditional woodworking and cabin skills

Special Provisions--NA

Economic and Time Constraints—The hunting patrols that would have been conducted out of the Snipe Lake cabin may not be conducted at all, which may result in a lack of enforcement presence in the area and potentially increased violations of park regulations. If the patrols are conducted, they would be based from Lucy Lake cabin, (which would require rehabilitation of that cabin which is not historic and is more of an eyesore due to metal construction) or from Twin Lakes. Both of these more distant locations would require additional aircraft flights resulting in more fuel consumption and more noise and intrusions from these additional Overflights.

Additional Wilderness-specific Comparison Criteria--NA

Step 2 Decision: What is the <u>Minimum</u> Activity?
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The selected alternative is:

Proposed Action: Alt 1

Describe the rationale for selecting this alternative:

This rehabilitation will prevent loss of a historic resource and provide a shelter for park administrative purposes. Using this facility in a dual role meets the program goals of both programs and is a negligible effect on wilderness character since the cabin already exists. The use of chainsaws in this remote part of the preserve will be of short duration and will be limited to the necessary use for cutting and trimming trees and notching cabin logs. Hand tools will be used whenever possible. There is no one trained in the use of a cross cut saw, and there is none available locally for the work. Aircraft and snowmachine use is in accordance with ANILCA and implementing regulations.

Describe any monitoring and reporting requirements:

Documentation of the repair under historic preservation guidelines and SHPO requirements.

Please check any Wilderness Act Section 4(c) uses approved in this alternative:

- ☐ mechanical transport ☒ landing of aircraft (approved in ANILCA regulations)
- ☒ motorized equipment (chainsaw) ☐ temporary road
- ☒ motor vehicles (snowmachine approved in ANILCA regulations)
- ☒ structure or installation (existing cabin rehab)
- ☐ motorboats

Approvals	Signature	Name	Position	Date
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Recommended:				
Approved:				