

# Wasilla

## Results of South Denali Interpretive Master Plan Community Meeting – September 28, 2007

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### What stories would you share with an out-of-town visitor? About your community... About Curry Ridge and this region...

- Ecology: Plant identification, each habitat area
- Rescue from plane crash
- Mountaineering: complement story on north side, early explorations... by river boat following drainages... winter ascents (see signage at South Denali Viewpoint)... Dave Johnston story (living historical treasure)
- Mining story
- Indigenous use of the area. Connect with the elders for stories
- Interpretive trail systems... chance for people to explore sites and use all of their senses
- Alaskan artists... how the region inspires their work
- Curry hotel on the railroad... how advanced it was... tie into the Alaska railroad
- Dioramas, sculptures of the range, Sheldon Amphitheater, Ruth Glacier...
- Different viewpoints... not just linear... show depth of the mountains
- Glacial recession over time
- Geological history of the mountain range
- Bush pilots, Don Sheldon, Hudson
- History of the Parks Highway... development of the area... transportation corridor along the Chulitna River
- Wildlife story of the area... hunting and trapping
- Talk about a land ethic... how the visitor center is developed... philosophy of having a wilderness park... preserving the wilderness integrity
- Holding onto the value of what Curry Ridge is... tourism comes second.

### What effects do you foresee the South Denali facility having on the region, your community, or Curry Ridge? Potential benefits... Concerns...

- Avoid "glitter gulch"... concern about the private property in-holdings within the park...
  - Emphasis on acquiring the in-holdings before development (access road) occurs
  - Develop land use controls
- Funding operations and maintenance
- Perform updated and current biological inventory of landscape and identifying important habitat

- Road is a significant impact on the site... it is a difficult area to access. Access will improve. Will degrade the qualities of Curry Ridge... the reason the visitor center is located at the site.
- Transitional area is important to black bears... spring and fall for berries... important post rut recovery area for bull moose... important travel area for moose... snow machine access will drive wildlife to other places
- It will also become a summer time hub for foot travel... increase access to the ridge
- Will this provide an advantage for multi-day hiking... where will the trail go in? Connection point to existing trail. Have the ability to develop trails correctly and minimize impact.
- Large number of people crawling over the alpine ridge top areas... difficult to anticipate the impact... prediction of 400,000 visitors during summer... some dispute over the numbers...
- Advantage of this road... park road instead of DOT road... management controls and access
- Restrict hunting in the area.
- Concern about snow machines having access to the road... no reason for people to walk up to the Ridge... one of the few places in Alaska that is quiet... management opportunity to restrict snow machines... management must be in place before the road is constructed... could move snowmobiles to Kesugi Ridge
- Many other opportunities are being offered along the Parks Highway and Petersville Road for motorized use. Might be a balance between this visitor facility.

**How can the South Denali facility be developed to benefit Alaska residents?  
Specific features of the visitor center    Specific features of the site**

- Build physical shelter where a person can get warmed up... warm drink... concessions that are tasteful without impacting the environment
- Like the idea of condensing the campus of buildings to one
- Concern about the size of the building
- Some of the same educational opportunities should be available indoors
- Have it open more than 4 months of the year... year-round. Most of the winter, the mountain is visible. Denali National Park is closed.
- Facility that would encourage people to recreate... snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, non-motorized.
- Retreats, educational workshops that center around core values of the landscape (like Murie Center in Denali NP). "Wilderness" meeting space to work on issues of preservation...
- Open space area for classrooms or public meetings. Fireplace.
- Education for school children, training for teachers, graduate work... address Alaskan issues
- Key: Shoulder season and winter use. Function in the summer is different than in the shoulder/winter seasons.

- Access Blair Lake to the south of Lake 1787. Some concern about the Boy Scouts camp. Protect public's right to use the state park lake.

**What/who are some resources that we can investigate or interview to learn more about this area?**

- Dan Elliot... on the ground experience
- Brown bear habitat north of the site
- Dave Johnston: mountaineering, one of the first state park rangers, knows the area... lives in Talkeetna
- Pete Robinson... maintenance person in state park... mountaineer
- Dave Porter... Trapper Creek... ranger
- Mountaineering rangers in Talkeetna... Roger Robinson, Brian O.
- Alaska Natural History Association, Mat-Su, (indigenous, mining history)
- Johnny Baker... early miner and trapper... Talkeetna
- Cliff Hudson video... Talkeetna... put out this last year... history of the area and personalities.
- Alaska Railroad... Curry and Curry Lookout
- Trapper Creek Museum... Mr. Marsh
- Roberta Sheldon... Talkeetna
- Joe Richardson...
- Dennis Heikes... former superintendent of Mat-Su
- Dale Bingham... Eagle River, precedes Dennis
- Trapper Creek Planning Committee

**Do you have other questions or comments concerning the interpretive plan for the South Denali Visitor Facility?**

- Plans for security in the winter if the building isn't open? Staff would still be available in the Transportation Hub.
- Want as little impact as possible... small footprint, low profile

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If you have more information to add, see any errors in this report, or if you have questions about this project, contact:

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