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**South Denali Visitor Complex**  
**Visioning Meeting for Interpretive Master Plan**

**August 16, 2007**

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**Facilitators**

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**Participants**

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- Jane Burks, Doyon/Aramark Joint Venture, Denali Concessions
- Jenni Burr, NPS-Talkeetna
- Chris Degernes, Alaska State Parks
- Carol Harding, NPS-Interpretive Planner
- Bill Kiger, Alaska State Parks
- Eileen McGurk, Owner, Cantwell RV Park
- Missy Smothers, NPS-Talkeetna
- Miriam Valentine, NPS-Talkeetna

## Visioning

The written Vision Statement of the South Denali Visitor Complex is:

*The South Denali Visitor Center will be a sustainable learning and recreation gateway, providing a welcoming and accessible interpretive transition for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. The visitor center, trails, and viewing areas will be unimposing and harmoniously nestled within the surrounding landscape, furnishing venues for education, study, and wildlife and scenic viewing.... This year-round gathering place will enable visitors to experience migrating and resident wildlife, breath-taking view of Denali and the Alaska Range, and Alaskan nights painted with sheets of dancing aurora. Visitors will come to experience and stay to enjoy.*

In your opinion, what **specific goals** will the South Denali Visitor Complex help to achieve?

- Demonstrate commitment to stewardship (LEED, Green architecture and development, alternative fuels, view shed preservation) (17)
- Very active use-outdoor recreational activities-indoor hands-on, multi-generational and abilities (14)
- Incorporate a wide variety of viewpoints of the resource and facilitate understanding between user groups (10)
- Exploit multi-modal opportunities (9)
- Education connection with local youth (7)
- South Denali should release pressure from Denali NP-economic growth of communities-enhance scenic byways experience (6)
- Connect cultural and recreational resources with the natural resources-celebrate community heritage (6)
- Connect the people of Anchorage and communities north of year-round recreation and enjoyment (5)
- Access and facilitate responsible use of resources- promote resource protection (5)
- This will be a destination facility (5)
- Promote casual enjoyment-common-must be affordable (4)
- Celebrate the stunning natural setting (4)
- Interpret stories that other centers have not addressed (mountains) (4)
- Come for the view of Denali and landscape (4)
- Appreciation for the South Denali region and its unique natural resources (3)
- Central axis point to multiple agency lands-cooperation (2)
- Connect local communities to the area-get communities involved along with tourists (2)
- Strong connection to the environment and environmental changes in the area (2)
- Provide information/infrastructure for recreational activities (1)
- Expand access to the park (0)

## Audience

Who are the **target audiences** and **potential audiences** of the South Denali Visitor Complex?

- Local residents-nearby (Trapper Creek, Sunshine, Talkeetna) (9)
- Winter recreationists (9)
- Alaska residents (especially off-season) (9)
- Ethnic groups-diverse (8)
- Motorized and non-motorized visitors (9)
- Schools and education (7)
- Special interest groups-photographers, birders (6)
- Virtual arm-chair visitors (4)
- Group meetings and retreats (4)
- Package tourists (3)
- Families (3)
- Independent travelers (3)
- Visitors of all ages (3)
- Eco-tourists (3)
- Multigenerational family units (3)
- People of economic walks of life (3)
- Alaskans hosting visiting friends and relatives (2)
- Convention groups (2)
- Native Alaskan population (2)
- Denali in a day tourists (1)
- Anchorage residents
- Seasonal employees (1)
- People of all abilities (1)
- Boy Scouts (1)
- International travelers (1)
- Return visitors (1)
- Mat-Su residents/Denali residents (1)
- “Drop in” visitors (1)
- Hikers (0)
- Active adventure tour groups (0)
- Bus stops-transportation (0)
- Local businesses (0)
- Artists (0)
- Politicians (0)
- Retirees (0)
- Elder hostels (0)
- Scientists (0)
- RV Drivers (0)

## Stories

What are the **important stories** to be told at the South Denali Visitor Complex?

- Interpretation of Alaska recreation (8)
- Future trends should be planned for-changeable exhibits-current issues (8)
- Global connections (migration, tourism, global warming, pollution) (8)
- Stories of ecosystems-interconnections and vulnerability-connection to the Greater Denali ecosystem (7)
- Mountaineering (Cook, etc.) (6)
- Expedition history of the Region (6)
- History of the railroad, Curry, hotel, skiing (6)
- Pioneering the Parks Highway-Alaska' frontier culture both past and present (6)
- Alaska native perspective (6)
- Uncloaking the Great One-interpreting Mt. McKinley when it is hidden (5)
- Gold discovery-1905 (4)
- Multi-modal history (human transportation) (4)
- Wilderness values (3)
- River systems (highway to interior) (3)
- Homesteading the area (3)
- WWII Bomber crashed on the ridge-Rupert Pratt (3)
- Alaska perspective on hunting and fishing (game management units) (3)
- Differences and partnerships between state and federal agencies (3)
- Mount McKinley-what can you see? Spotting scopes (3)
- Historic and prehistoric use of South Denali region (2)
- Susitna Station-supply hub during gold mining (2)
- Story of Transition-weather, vegetation, transportation (2)
- Wildlife story (2)
- Adaptations of plants and animals in alpine tundra (2)
- The Alaska Range-backbone of south central Alaska that has a place in its history, both natural and cultural (1)
- "Gateway" to the interior (1)
- Alpine sensitivity-vegetation (1)
- Story of salmon (1)
- Story of geology-plate tectonics, etc. (1)
- Sustainability (1)
- Environmental Change (glaciers, etc.) (0)
- Story of glaciers-sculpted by ice (0)
- Story of bears and safety (0)

## **Facilities**

What **developments and activities** should be planned for the **visitor center**? What should not be?

- Earth sheltered facility (8)
- Low energy footprint, but practical for the site (6)
- No plastic wildlife (5)
- Tundra garden (ID plants) (5)
- Program/meeting space (4)
- Complements National Park (doesn't duplicate) (4)
- Comfort area-fireplace, seating, area rug (4)
- Activities that don't rely on weather (3)
- Year-round technology opportunities (Wi-Fi, Geo caching, cell phones, outlets, charging) (3)
- Feature universal design throughout (3)
- Caretaker facility (3)
- Trails should be designed to encourage discover and protect fragile environment (3)
- Overnight EE Center/room with cooking facilities (3)
- Unobstructed view (no roads, buildings, etc.) (3)
- Four-season trails, multi-use trails (motorized and non-motorized) (3)
- No noise or air polluting energy generation (3)
- No large mounted animals (3)
- Easily changed exhibits (3)
- Allow for guided activities (ski touring, nature guiding, etc.) (2)
- "Hands on" trail (2)
- Thematic commercial businesses (coffee shops) (2)
- Opportunities for independent travelers to experience site away from tour groups (2)
- Kid's corner/Junior Ranger area (2)
- Adequate storage space (possibly heated) (2)
- Computer kiosk linking to other recreational opportunities (2)
- Interpretive trails (1)
- Backcountry trip planning area (1)
- Interactive exhibits (1)
- Space to show a movie (theater with sloped floor or multi-purpose room with flat floor?). Consider numbers (could be 50+ people) (1)
- Mountain web cam (1)
- Reading room-reference library (1)
- Adequate office space for interpreters, rangers, and other staff (1)
- Covered deck areas (1)
- Self-guided trail tours (1)
- No depot-like shuttle drop-off area (1)
- Coffee shop, hot snacks-cozy area (0)
- Related sales outlet (0)

- Ability to reserve Denali National Park buses from this facility (0)
- Allow tour buses to drive up (0)
- Bathrooms (0)
- Space for “Ranger Chats,” out of the rain (0)
- Sanctioned berry picking areas (0)
- Mounted animals (0)
- Staff parking (0)
- Need for handouts? (0)
- No horses near facility (0)
- No large private car parking lots (0)
- Minimize equipment maintenance (0)

What **developments and activities** should be planned for the **transportation hub**? What should not be?

- Rental for skis, snowshoes, etc. (5)
- Screened from highway (5)
- Year-round restrooms and drinking water (5)
- Bike and ski trails (4)
- Ranger contact station (4)
- Off-peak season Alaska resident access without shuttles (4)
- Volunteer employee housing (3)
- Commuter trails (3)
- Warming hut for winter users (3)
- Information kiosks to catching shuttle, etc. (2)
- Shuttles need to be quiet (2)
- Winter RV-area (2)
- Backcountry information station (2)
- Campground
- Need interpreters on shuttles (1)
- Information/activities accessible for through/highway travelers (1)
- Limited interpretation/activities here... save for visitor center (1)
- Bus shelter and luggage storage (1)
- Commercial parking visually segregated from private (1)
- Include interpretation on the trail up to the facility (1)
- Local business information (1)
- Amphitheater/campfire ring associated with campground (1)
- Power generation facility and fuel storage (0)
- Have loop shuttle to visitor center for different activities (backpacking, boats, trains)

What **other developments** should be planned for the South Denali Visitor Complex?

- Shuttle system between state park trailheads (including rafting, riverboats, railroad, etc.) (9)
- Strategic view planning-road alignments, trail development, etc. (5)
- Accessible trails near visitor center (3)
- Consider concessionaires where appropriate (3)
- Public use cabins (2)
- Easy river access (2)
- Winter transportation to visitor center (2)
- Employee housing (2)
- Bookstore restaurant (1)
- Other trails to Lake 1787, Curry Lookout, Curry (1)
- Campers store (1)
- Maintenance facility- operational and buses-consider what is needed for winter (1)
- Showers, laundry, lockers (1)