



FRIENDS OF KENNICOTT, INC.

Box 241362, Anchorage, Alaska 99524

February 15, 2011

Bruce Rogers, Planner
Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve
P.O. Box 439
Copper Center, Alaska 99573

Dear Bruce:

This letter constitutes the scoping comments of Friends of Kennecott on the upcoming revision of the Kennecott Interim Operations Plan. The Board of Directors appreciates the amount of time and effort you and other park staff are investing in development of the revised Plan. In preparation for the Plan, Friends of Kennecott hosted a wide-ranging “brainstorming” session in Kennecott on August 18, 2010. Among the many important topics discussed, Friends of Kennecott highlights the following issues for attention in the revised Plan. Not all of these issues can necessarily be solved solely by the Plan; therefore, if other processes or mandates have a role to play it would be helpful to articulate them. For all planning issues, we appreciate the Park’s efforts to take maximum advantage of community input and we encourage this to continue in the future. We recommend creating a specific goal addressing the Park’s continued commitment to community engagement.

Issues for consideration in the Revised Kennecott Operating Plan

Access issues:

- ORV use
- Parking
- Formal and informal trails

Noise issues:

- ORVs and NPS equipment
- NPS and private generators
- Music

Historic restoration/ stabilization issues:

- What are the detailed plans for the Mill Building and other structures?
- How will NPS accommodate public access (Mill Tours) during construction?
- What other site modifications are proposed as part of planned stabilization activities or as stand-alone projects, e.g. water systems?
- “Sanitization” of Kennecott: What “debris” merits retention or clean-up? How is this determination made? Friends of Kennecott favors retaining artifacts in place to maximum extent practical.
- What do “light touch” and “stabilization” really mean?
- When is flexibility allowed in architectural decisions and how can it be achieved in light of standard historic preservation guidelines?
- What time period(s) (and energy level) is the focus? For example:
 - 1925 when the Mill was going strong?
 - 1965 when a sense of stillness and abandonment prevailed?
 - Or can different parts of Kennecott represent different eras?

Recreation Hall: The park needs to recommit to a strong partnership management approach that allows and encourages non-traditional NPS uses of this key facility that was stabilized specifically with community use in mind. The plan needs an objective to work with Friends of Kennicott and the Wrangell Mountains Center on how best to use the unspent Rasmuson Foundation grant money (approximately \$10,000). The funds, currently held in an NPS account, are dedicated to Recreation Hall upgrades and/or equipment that would facilitate community use. Also, Friends of Kennicott requests the plan allow for a modest, architecturally-appropriate storage facility in the immediate vicinity of the Recreation Hall.

The Operations Plan should recognize that NPS is the biggest agent of change at Kennecott:

- Kennecott does not equal “the park”
- The “Face of Kennecott” needs to include recognition of the living, breathing community
- NPS should help the site speak for itself

The Operations Plan needs to assess its short and long-term impacts on the local economy, for example:

- Changes to the local economy are largely affected by park employment
- Local businesses can’t compete with NPS for local employees
- Concern about the viability of local hire over the long term
- Concern about NPS taking over private mill tours
- How could NPS employment in the McCarthy-Kennicott area be affected in light of possible federal budget cuts?

What is the interpretive vision for Kennecott?

- Need to recognize and respect post-mining history
- Respect for the “ghost town” history
- Other human history (besides mining) is important
- Only a small percentage of Kennecott’s human history is active mining
- Need recognition of the dynamic and living contemporary community
- The natural history of Kennecott is missing from interpretation
- The surrounding setting of incredibly scenic backcountry is also missing
- Is there a role for education about climate change?
- Removal of copper ore – What’s the policy? (Casual collection seems to be OK)

It may be helpful to check out Friends of Kennicott’s newly updated and expanded website at <http://www.friendsofkennicott.org/index.html>. The site, which is still “under construction,” contains some key dates and events related to the acquisition along with initial partnership and planning documents, many of which are now available electronically for the first time.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,



for: Ben Shaine,
Board President