

**National Park Service**

**Denali**

National Park & Preserve  
Alaska

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**Winter Season: Road Open to Mile 3 (Park Headquarters)**

The Denali Park Road is currently open to Mile 3, Park Headquarters. Wintry conditions beyond that point prevent vehicle travel, though pedestrian travel is permitted. The Winter Visitor Center is open daily, 9:30 am - 5 pm, at Mile 1.5.

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# Walter Harper Talkeetna Ranger Station Dedication



*Left to right: Dana Wright, Anna Erbeck and her granddaughter Alaina, Mike Harper and his wife Jane, Senator Lisa Murkowski, Esther Fast and her brother Richard Fast (seated), Johanna Harper and Superintendent Don Striker.*

*NPS Photo/Kailin Thoresen*

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Denali National Park and Preserve, AK: The National Park Service celebrated the accomplishments and legacy of Alaska Native Walter Harper during the dedication ceremony for the Walter Harper Talkeetna Ranger Station on Wednesday, July 2.

Over 70 people, including Senator Lisa Murkowski and many descendants of Walter Harper, attended the event, which took place during a beautiful sunny afternoon in front of the ranger station in "downtown" Talkeetna.

On June 7, 1913, Harper became the first person to set foot on the summit of Mt. McKinley as a member of the Stuck-Karstens Expedition. Senator Murkowski introduced the legislation to rename the ranger station in his honor as part of the Denali National Park Improvement Act, which was signed into law on September 19, 2013. The ranger station is the base of operations for Denali National Park's mountaineering operations, and climbers from all over the world pass through its doors prior to beginning their attempt on the peak.

Senator Murkowski was the keynote speaker for the 40 minute event. Park Superintendent Don Striker served as master of ceremonies, and after his welcome Bishop Mark Lattime of the Episcopal Diocese of Alaska led off the event with an invocation. Mike Harper, great nephew of Walter, spoke first, relating a brief history of Walter's life. He was followed by Walter's great grandnephew Dana Wright, who related what he had learned about his forebear's role in the first ascent of the mountain, and compared that to his own very difficult experience climbing the same route last summer with other descendants of the 1913 expedition (he did make the summit). The Superintendent spoke briefly about the Harper's legacy to mountaineering, and a letter from Senator Begich was read by his field representative prior to Senator Murkowski's address. After the Bishop's benediction, everyone enjoyed some light refreshments, including cookies from Talkeetna's fine bakeries.

Harper family members were deeply appreciative of the legislation and the public event recognizing the renaming of the ranger station. Kudos go to the park's Talkeetna-based staff, who spent countless hours tidying up the ranger station inside and out and facilitated multiple logistics for the event, including gathering fresh flowers that morning to place adjacent to the podium and on the refreshment tables.

Last updated: April 14, 2015

## **CONTACT THE PARK**

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A ranger is available 9 am—4 pm daily (except on major holidays). If you get to the voicemail, please leave a message and we'll call you back as soon as we finish with the previous caller.