

HB

580

COMMITTEE REPORT

1/15/76

HOUSE

FINANCE

Mr. Speaker:

Date 3-8-76

The Committee on RESOURCES has had HB 580

under consideration. A Majority of the members of the Committee

() recommends it DO PASS

() recommends it DO NOT PASS

() recommends it DO PASS WITH ATTACHED AMENDMENT(S)

() recommends it BE REPLACED WITH CS FOR _____ AND THAT

CS FOR _____ DO PASS

() "and" recommends it BE REFERRED TO THE _____

COMMITTEE

() reports it back WITHOUT RECOMMENDATION

(X) "other" with individual recommendations

Members signing the Majority report:

Do NOT PASS!!!
[Handwritten signatures]

Members NOT concurring in the Majority report:

[Signature] recommends: Do Pass

[Signature] recommends: Do Pass

TIME Haushberger recommends: Do Pass

[Signature] recommends: " "

[Signature] recommends: NO Pass.

[Signature] Chairman

#M

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PMS NELS ANDERSON CHAIRMAN HOUSE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

JUN

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TELEGRAM

RCA ALASKA COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

PHONE: 586-6440

JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801

THE ALASKA CONSERVATION SOCIETY SUPPORTS WHOLEHEARTEDLY

HOUSE BILL 580 ESTABLISHING TALKEETNA MOUNTAINS STATE

PARK

CELIA HUNTER PRES ALASKA CONSERVATION SOCIETY

STATE OF ALASKA

JAY S. HAMMOND, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DIVISION OF PARKS

323 E. FOURTH AVENUE—ANCHORAGE 99501

TESTIMONY: PROPOSED TALKEETNA MOUNTAIN STATE PARK; HB 580*

Chairwoman Poland, Chairman Anderson, members of the House and Senate Resources Committees. I am Russ Cahill, Director of the Alaska Division of Parks, and I wish to present some comments on both the proposed Talkeetna Mountains State Park, HB 580, and the Talkeetna Mountains State Agricultural Reserve, HB 664.

The history of the proposed Talkeetna Mountains State Park is one of evolution of boundary, purpose and management criteria. Past legislative sessions have seen a potpourri of bills introduced. Even the titles of the various pieces of proposed legislation have varied widely. Last year alone there were the Hatcher Pass Recreation Area, Garret Heinie Snider Recreation Area, as well as the Talkeetna Mountains State Park. Support and opposition to the various bills has been heated and emotional. I am sure most persons here realize that this is not the first such legislative hearing on the concept of either park or recreation classification for a portion of the southwestern Talkeetna Mountains.

*Presented to a joint hearing committee of the Alaska State Senate and House Resources Committees in Palmer on 7 February 1976.

The State has not been inactive on the various proposals. In 1970 a contract was negotiated with a private firm which led to a document titled "Hatcher Pass Study Area". This booklet proposed the creation of a new state recreation area. All of these various activities have been augmented by active participation by various citizens groups. The result of the total concern focused upon the Hatcher Pass-Talkeetna Mountains Area has led to the State's drafting of proposed legislation which would create a new state park.

The bill we have proposed and which we support contains a departure from the traditional type of park management. The departure of which I speak is a zone within the boundary of the proposed park which would be open to restricted multiple-use management. We feel that this concession is necessary for three major reasons:

1. The mineralized Willow Creek Mining District, which contains numerous current and patented mining claims and lies within the proposed park boundary.
2. The occurrence of grazing leases.
3. The presence of numerous private land parcels, as well as lands selected by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Most of these land uses occur within close proximity to the Fishhook-Willow Road, which bisects the proposed multiple use zone.

Visitation along the Fishhook-Willow Road, the main access route through the southern portion of this proposed State Park, exceeded 155,000 persons during 1975. Although some of this use can be attributed to people operating mines, prospecting, or managing livestock or leased grazing lands, it can probably be assumed that at least 90% of this number, or nearly 140,000 people visited the area seeking recreation. Recreation activities commonly occurring within the boundary of this proposed park include driving for pleasure, hiking, skiing, snowmobiling, camping, picnicking, and hang-gliding.

The proposed state park includes the upper drainages of the Kashwitna River, the Little Susitna River and Willow Creek. The size of the proposal, if you exclude mining claims, Borough selected lands and private parcels, is approximately 425,000 acres.

Let me elaborate on the concept of the multiple-use zone. Nearly all of the mining claims, private lands and grazing leases have been placed within a zone which will remain "open" to multiple-use. This zone will be the subject of a land use plan to be composed by the representatives of the Department of Highways, Fish and Game, and the Department of

Natural Resource's Divisions of Agriculture, Geological and Geophysical Survey, Lands and Parks. This land use planning team would also enlist the Planning Director of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. The multiple-use plan would be approved by the Commissioner of Natural Resources, and updated every 5 years.

There has been concern expressed about the disposition of private properties within this proposed park. It is the intention of the Division of Parks to not purchase private lands unless they are key parcels for campground construction or other management facilities. If it becomes necessary to acquire a parcel, it would be done at fair market value, based upon appraisal.

There has also been concern expressed about hunting. The legislation has been drafted to allow the Department of Fish and Game to continue to manage fish and wildlife resources within the park, and yes, the area would be open to hunting. It may be necessary to control the use of firearms in the immediate vicinity of recreational facilities such as picnic areas, trailheads and campgrounds for reasons of visitor safety.

It should also be pointed out that the proposed Willow South capital site borders the western boundary of the proposed Talkeetna Mountains State Park. The boundary of the park has been drawn to avoid overlapping the required 100

square miles of State land. All three of the proposed capital sites, one of which will be chosen, are within approximately 40 miles of this potential park; the park would therefore provide a nearby recreation area for future capital residents.

The topography of the proposed park is generally very rugged, steep and mountainous. It is probably safe to estimate that over 80% of the park is above timberline or alpine in nature. Snowfields and glaciers are also common, particularly in the east-central portion of this proposed park.

Another commonly asked question is would the State provide rangers to patrol the area, as well as recreation facilities? Park rangers would begin patrolling the area upon the effective date of any legislation passed, although patrols would be sporadic at first. When budget allows, additional rangers would be hired, trained and assigned to this Park. Recreation development such as trails, campgrounds, picnic areas and a ranger station and visitor center would be provided over the next several years, all to be staffed by rangers and maintenance personnel. We feel this is important not only for the management of the park resources, but also for the protection of private property in the area.

It has been noted that the original Hatcher Pass Recreation

Area proposal has been expanded to include the upper watershed of the Kashwitna River. The reason this has been done is to provide a balance of road-accessible intensive use recreation area, with a large scenic park zone. There have been few intrusions into the Upper Kashwitna River area by modern man. It would therefore provide an alternative type of activity potential to the roaded lower portion of the park. Wildland types of activities in the Kashwitna River Valley would include boating on the river, backpacking, and camping in a primitive environment such as all of Alaska used to be. Such amenities will accrue in value as our population grows and development activities continue. When the capital moves, a new city will result, a city close to this park. The presence of nearby developed recreation facilities along the Hatcher Pass Road, balanced with the splendid wilderness of the Upper Kashwitna, will offer the diversity of opportunities which Alaskans value. The new capital city is projected to reach a population of 30,000 people by the year 1985. Anchorage's population will also grow, probably to more than 260,000 by 1985.

One of the considerations of the State was the possible loss of tax revenue to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough which would be caused by this park. The conclusion of State planners

was that, due to the low development potential of most of this park, (since it is for the most part, mountains, alpine tundra and glaciers) that conversion to private ownership was not desirable. It is also thought that recreation activities introduced a significant economic demand for tangibles such as snowmobiles, skiis, backpacks and campers, and therefore this park would provide a positive economic factor. The area of the Willow Creek-Little Susitna Multiple Use Zone would continue to provide its resource base to the the area's tax base.

I would now like to comment on the proposed Talkeetna Mountain State Agricultural Reserve, HB 664. This legislation is of particular interest to us since the majority of the lands contained within this bill overlap the proposed park. As part of our analysis of the proposed agricultural reserve, we consulted with data accumulated by the Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission on agricultural land suitabilities. Of particular concern were the two catagories which the Commission has mapped and made available to the public. The first catagory analyzed was "upland soils" which essentially means that 50% or more of the total area within the upland soil is arable and suitable for crops. The other catagory that we analyzed was "livestock range" lands which are suitable for the grazing of stock but generally not arable

and useful for the growing of crops. The total land area within the agricultural reserve is approximately 430,000 acres. Of this approximately 13% is classifiable as upland soil and livestock range. Thus, 87% of this agricultural reserve proposal, according to the best facts available, is not suitable for agricultural purposes. I am of the opinion that the area is better suited for a park, with the agricultural use zone managed for multiple use.

We are of the firm belief that we can handle the difficult problem of using the mineral and agricultural resources in the Willow Creek area, while enhancing and controlling the recreational use which occurs there now. There are some who have a suspicion of anything with the word "park" attached to it. Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I ask that you give us a chance to show you how well a piece of land can be managed.

In conclusion, it is my recommendation that the Senate Resources and House Resources Committees act favorably upon the Park bill. If there are any questions, I would be pleased to answer them. Thank you.

Russell W. Cahill, Director
Alaska State Park System

2561 Lovejoy Drive
Anchorage, Alaska 99504
February 6, 1976

Representative Nels A. Anderson, Jr.
Chairman, House Resources Committee
Pouch V, State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Representative Anderson:

As you may recall, I visited Juneau last spring to testify before the Senate Resources Committee on the proposed Talkeetna Mountains State Park. While I was there, I met with you to explain the proposal. You asked whether Cook Inlet Region's interests were affected, and indicated that if they had no objections to the proposed park, you would have no objections and that it would receive timely attention by your committee.

As I am sure you are aware, lands within the proposed park that were selectable by Cook Inlet Region and several villages are part of the Cook Inlet Land Trade; these lands are to be state lands and CIRI and the villages are to receive other lands which are more desirable from their point of view. This eliminates any objections CIRI had to the proposed park.

The park proposal developed by the coalition of outdoor recreation and conservation groups which my committee represents was introduced last spring as SB 387. At the end of the 1975 session it was in the Senate Resources Committee. Over the summer Division of Parks studied the proposal thoroughly and determined that some changes were necessary. The administration's revised version of the Talkeetna Mountains State Park proposal has been introduced as HB 580.

Our committee has worked with the administration in developing this revision. We are not totally happy with all of the changes which have been made, primarily because we feel that the boundaries of the recreation zone now include lands which should be in the limited use zone. However, we recognize the pressures and potential problems which are the reason for the change. In spite of our reservations, we support HB 580 and urge your committee to act expeditiously and favorably on it. We would appreciate knowing your position.

I am sure you are aware of the heavy, increasing and conflicting recreational pressures on the area, and all the widespread support for the park proposal

Representative Nels A. Anderson, Jr.

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February 6, 1976

among outdoor recreational users in the Anchorage area. There is also support among similar groups and individuals in the Matanuska Valley.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Helen Nienhueser
Chairman, Ad Hoc Committee
for Talkeetna Mountains State Park

cc: Representative Ted Smith



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Joan McGee

Box 336

Wasilla Ak

Feb 2, 1976

Rep. Nels Anderson Jr
Rm 118. Capitol
Juneau. Ak

Dear Rep. Anderson.

Please add me more check on the
bodycount chart of those against
a Talkeetna State Park ad for an
alternate solution along the lines of
the Mat Su Borough Resolution # 76-7.
Also while I am at it a check on the
chart of those against tying up Honors
Coast line so they lose all chance
of development - maybe even their
fishing industry so they say.

Sincerely

Joan McGee

TELEGRAM

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WE SUPPORT THE CREATION OF TALKEETNA MOUNTAIN

STATE PARK PLEASE EXPEDITE PASSAGE FROM COMMITTEE

NATE AND LIZ JOHNSON 3540 TANGLEWOOD ANCHORAGE 99503

TELEGRAM

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CHAPTER R STRONGLY SUPPORTS HB580

VIRGINIA DALPIAZ PRESIDENT

UPPER COOK INLET CHAPTER ALASKA CONSERVATION SOCIETY

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PMS REP NELS ANDERSON

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STRONGLY SUPPORT ENACTMENT OF HB580 HAD INTENDED TO
TESTIFY PERSONALLY IN PALMER SATURDAY WORK PREVENTED
HATCHER PASS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT RECREATION AREA TO
RESIDENTS OF STATE THE STATE LEGISLATURE HAS EXCELLENT
OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW CONGRESS THAT WE KNOW HOW TO MANAGE
OUR LANDS AND RESOURCES. THIS ISSUE IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT
IN THE D2 ISSUES THE LAND USE PLANNING COMMISSION
RECOMMENDATIONS AND THOSE OF OTHERS TALK ABOUT KEY PARK
AREAS ADJOINED BY BUFFER TALKEETNA PARK LEGISLATION
CAN SET PRECEDENT SHOWING CONGRESS THAT ALASKANS CAN
MANAGE OUR OWN AFFAIRS

JULES PEG GLORIA ANNA NANCY TILESTON