

HCR

51

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

STEVE COWPER, GOVERNOR

400 WILLOUGHBY AVE.
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801-1796
PHONE: (907) 465-2400

March 30, 1988

The Honorable Sam Cotten
The Honorable Adelheid Herrmann
House Resources Committee
P.O. V Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Representatives Cotten and Herrmann:

Subject: HCR 51, Relating to the use of helicopters and snowmachines in Chugach State Park.

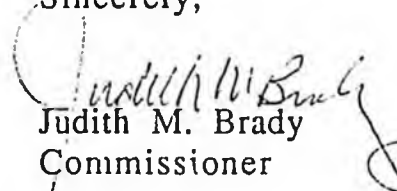
Background: In January, 1987, the Division of Parks received a permit application for flightseeing landings in Chugach State Park. In February, 1988, a preliminary decision was issued to solicit concessionaire proposals for this service in the park. As a result of substantial public opposition, the Division of Parks decided to consider the decision in more detail through an update of the park master plan which would entail additional public meetings. In the master plan process, eight public meetings were held, and written and oral comments solicited. As a result of this process, the decision was made to prohibit helicopter landings in Chugach State Park.

Also resulting from this process was the decision to prohibit snowmachine use in the Eagle River greenbelt. The master plan directs that a separate land management plan be completed for the Eagle River greenbelt and the question of snow machine use will again be considered.

The Department of Natural Resources would consider passage of HCR 51 direction to reconsider its decisions with respect to helicopter and snowmachine use.

We welcomes legislative direction and recommendation with respect to this difficult decision.

Sincerely,


Judith M. Brady
Commissioner

STATE OF ALASKA
1988 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL VERSION: _____
PUBLISH DATE: _____

FISCAL NOTE

REQUEST:

Revision Date: 5/31/88
 Title: Relating to use of helicopters in Agency Affected: Dept. of Natural Resources
Chugach State Park HCR 51 BRU: Park Management
 Sponsor: House Resources
 Requestor: House Resources Components: _____

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 88	FY 89	FY 90	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93
PERSONAL SERVICES	0	0	0	0	0	0
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING						

CAPITAL	0	0	0	0	0	0
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REVENUE						
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FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

GENERAL FUND	0	0	0	0	0	0
FEDERAL FUNDS						
OTHER						
TOTAL						

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

ANALYSIS : (Attach a separate page if necessary)

Passage of this Resolution will have no fiscal impact upon the department.

Prepared by: Lawrence Ostrovsky Phone: 465-2400
 Division: Commissioner's Office Date: 5/31/88

Approved by Commissioner: [Signature] Date: 5/31/88
 Agency: Department of Natural Resources

Distribution (by preparer):
 Legislative Finance
 Legislative Sponsor
 Requestor
 Office of Management and Budget
 Impacted Agency(ies)

ALASKA AIR CARRIERS ASSOCIATION

RESOLUTION #2

WHEREAS, Chugach State Park was created to provide the public with a variety of recreation opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Natural Resources has refused to permit any form of helicopter tour to Chugach State Park; and

WHEREAS, there are no reasonable and affordable opportunities for Anchorage based helicopter tours to alpine areas other than Chugach State Park; and

WHEREAS, nothing in the statute which created Chugach State Park precludes the use of helicopters for access to the Park; and

WHEREAS, helicopter tours are allowed under a permit system in federal wilderness, which is the most restrictive form of federal land management; and

WHEREAS, reasonable conditions and limitations have been offered to reduce the impact of helicopter tours to other users of the Park; and

WHEREAS, the hearing on the decision to reject helicopter use of the Park was held at the same time as the decision to allow a ski development within the Park, which was a much larger issue,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alaska Air Carriers Association strongly endorses HCR 51 and urges its passage this session.

BY: Bob Engelbrecht DATE: 3/21/88
Bob Engelbrecht
Executive Committee
Alaska Air Carriers Association

Not Distributed
to Committee
4-9-88

Trustees for ALASKA

March 24, 1988

Rep. Sam Cotten
Alaska State Legislature
P.O. Box V (MS 3100)
Juneau, AK 99811

HCR 51

Re: HCR 51

Dear Rep. Cotten:

Trustees for Alaska is dismayed that the House Resources Committee is considering a resolution that would instruct the Division of Parks to reconsider its decision not to allow helicopter landings in Chugach State Park or snowmachine use in the greenbelt.

Both of those decisions were made as part of the Park's planning process, after considerable public input. These matters were the subject of a Chugach State Park Advisory Board public meeting and two rounds of public meetings on the Park's Master Plan. Each round consisted of three meetings, one each in Anchorage, Eagle River and Girdwood. At each meeting at each phase of the planning process, helicopter landings and snowmachine use were soundly rejected by the public, with sentiment running three opposed to one in favor.

We question the appropriateness of the Legislature inserting itself into the planning process when there is absolutely no indication that the process is not functioning as it was intended. We are concerned that the resolution was the result of a meeting with the helicopter owners, while the views of neither the Parks Division nor the public were solicited by the Subcommittee.

We are concerned that this resolution will send a message to groups whose views do not prevail during the sanctioned planning process that they can go to the legislature to attempt to overturn that adverse decision. In that event, the planning process for state lands is basically useless; and the legislature can expect to see more such requests in the future.

From our vantage point, this as an erosion of the lawful planning process which we have agreed to participate in and whose lawful decisions we abide by. We are puzzled, for instance, why the resolution does not call for reopening the decision on the Eagle River Ski Resort since that issue was also considered at

HELICOPTER FLIGHTSEEING LANDINGS

IN

CHUGACH STATE PARK

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

prepared by

Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
Alaska Department of Natural Resources
March 30, 1988

prepared for

House Resources Committee
Alaska State Legislature

Contents

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Note: Additional information, including hearing transcripts, letters, petitions and miscellaneous correspondence regarding the proposal to land helicopters in Chugach State Park during commercial flightseeing trips is available at the DPOR's Southcentral Regional Office (Suite 1280, Frontier Building, 3601 C Street, Anchorage). Several files are also available for public review which deal with a proposal in 1979 to allow helicopter skiing in the park.

* NOTE: FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS EXCERPTED FROM
DPOB'S PUBLIC HEARING RELIED ON HELICOPTER FLIGHTSEEING
LANDINGS IN CHUGACH STATE PARK

Chugach State Park Master Plan Amendments

The Chugach State Park Master Plan (prepared by the Alaska Division of Parks, DNR, February 1980) is amended to include the following:

Helicopter Use

The landing of helicopters by private parties for recreational or scenic access or other activities in the park is prohibited. Commercial helicopters may not be chartered for general recreational access to the park.

The director may authorize helicopter landings for management purposes. Management purposes include: conducting or supporting scientific research including wildlife inventories, maintaining communications facilities which have been located in the park under special use permit, search and rescue operations, law enforcement, park ranger patrols, park facility development and maintenance. To the greatest extent possible, fixed wing aircraft should be used for these purposes because of their lower noise impact. Also, non-aircraft methods of accomplishing these projects or activities shall be considered before fixed-wing or

helicopter aircraft are used, particularly in wilderness areas.

The director may authorize helicopter landings for special events such as commercial filming or community festivals. In all cases, special event landings will not be allowed in or within 1 mile of a wilderness zone. The director shall consult with the Chugach State Park Citizens Advisory Board prior to issuing a permit. In issuing a permit for special events, the director shall take reasonable steps to avoid:

- landings in or low level flights over areas or at times of visitor use of the park,
- low level overflights of residential areas,
- disturbance to wildlife,
- landings in or low level flights over park wilderness areas,
- flights that will constitute a significant threat to public safety, or,
- landings that would be more appropriately located on lands outside the park or private lands within the park,
- other impacts which the division or director determines are significant.

PREPARED BY DPOB, A. L. LORGE, 3/29/88

FINAL POLICY

The division shall, to the extent staff and budget allows, monitor and record authorized and unauthorized helicopter activities in the park. Flightseeing overflights should also be monitored. This information should be retained to help provide an improved information base for policy development and decision-making concerning helicopter activities in the park.

The division should focus law enforcement efforts on unauthorized landings in the park. Further the division should begin to work with the FAA, military, pilots associations and other land management agencies to resolve or reduce conflicts between aerial and ground users of the park.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON DRAFT ALTERNATIVES

ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC COMMENTS ON
CHUGACH STATE PARK MASTER PLAN UPDATE ALTERNATIVES

AS OF 10/5/87

The following is a summary of both verbal comments, made either at hearings held in Eagle River, Wasilla, Girdwood and Anchorage, or written comments sent to the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation. Comments are divided into three groups representing the three areas of concern; Ski Area Development; Alternatives for Helicopter use; and, Alternatives of Use and Management for the Eagle River Greenbelt. It is further divided into group comments, individual comments, form letter comments, and finally a grand total of all comments (each group comment receiving one tally).

(2) Alternatives for Helicopter Use

Group Comments

11 individuals wrote and/or testified on behalf of groups regarding alternatives for helicopter use.

Alternatives:	A	B	C
Responses:	7	3	1
Percentage:	64%	27%	9%

Alternative A Groups Included:

- Alaska Survival
- Knik Kanoer's and Kayaker's, Inc.
- Alaska Wildlife Alliance
- Sierra Club
- Alaska Center for the Environment
- Knik Kanoer's and Kayaker's, Inc.
- Friends of Chugach State Park

Alternative B Groups Included:

- Resource Development Council (B+ One yr. trial)
- Chugiak-Eagle River Chamber of Commerce
- Alaska Visitor and Convention Bureau

Alternative C Groups Included:

- Alaska Helicopters

Individual Comments - Oral Testimony

27 individuals, representing themselves, commented on Alternative Helicopter Use.

Alternative:	A	B	C
Responses:	17	5	5
Percentage:	63%	18.5%	18.5%

Individual Comments - Written Testimony

19 persons wrote individual letters regarding Alternatives for Helicopter Use.

Alternatives:	A	B	C
Responses:	15	2	2
Percentage:	79%	10.5%	10.5%

66 persons signed form letters regarding Alternatives for Helicopter Use.

Alternatives:	A	B	C
Responses:	0	0	66
Percentage:	0%	0%	100%

85 persons commented on Alternatives for Helicopter Use by either an individually written letter or by signing a form letter.

Alternatives:	A	B	C
Responses:	15	2	68
Percentage:	18%	2%	80%

(Alternatives for Helicopter Use continued)

Grand Total - All responses received on Alternatives for Helicopter Use*

123 responses received regarding Alternatives for Helicopter Use

Alternatives:	A	B	C
Responses:	39	10	74
Percentage:	32%	8%	60%

Reasons FOR Helicopter landing site(s) included:

- Does not fly over private homes
- Potential economic returns for the Park
- Gives the handicapped and elderly access to the park
- Could allow locals to cheaply get into the park

Reasons AGAINST Helicopter landing site(s) included:

- Irreversible effect on wildlife
- Low stimulus to economy
- Benefits few people
- Elderly and handicapped can drive to areas and get similar views
- Integrity of the park is threatened
- Does not fit in with Park philosophy
- Helicopters can hover outside Park boundary for same view
- Negative effect on other visitors in the Park

ALTERNATIVES FOR HELICOPTER USE

RECOMMENDATION

The private, non-commercial landing of helicopters for recreational access or activities in the park is prohibited. Commercial helicopters may not be chartered for general recreational access to the park.

The director may authorize helicopter landings for management purposes. Management purposes include: conducting or supporting scientific research including wildlife inventories, maintaining communications facilities which have been located in the park under special park use permit, search and rescue operations, park ranger patrols and law enforcement, park facility development and maintenance, or similar activities.

The director may authorize helicopter landings for special events such as commercial filming and community festivals. In all cases, special event landings will not be allowed in or within 1 mile of a wilderness zone. Whenever possible, the director shall consult with the Chugach State Park Citizens Advisory Board. In issuing permits for special events, the director shall take reasonable steps to avoid:

- landings in or low level overflights over areas or times of visitor use of the park.
- low level overflights of residential areas.
- disturbance to wildlife.
- landings in or low level flight over park wilderness zones.
- flights that will constitute a threat to public safety. or,
- landings which would be more appropriately located on lands outside of the park.

Commercial flight-seeing and landing are proposed to be managed by one of the following alternatives:

ALTERNATIVE A: NO FLIGHT-SEEING LANDINGS

Under this alternative, commercial or non-commercial flight-seeing helicopter landings would be considered incompatible with the purposes of the park. No permits or concession contracts would be issued for this activity and all pending and future requests for such permission would be rejected.

ALTERNATIVE B: ONE COMMERCIAL FLIGHT-SEEING LANDING SITE IN NATURAL ZONE

DRAFTS POLICY & ALTERNATIVES FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Under this alternative, one operator would be selected through a competitively bid RFP process to use one designated site, mapped on the following page. The following criteria have been used in selecting the landing site. Operational stipulations which would govern the contract are also listed.

Site Selection Criteria

- good view.
- no conflict with overflight of residential areas.
- no significant adverse impact on park wildlife.
- no significant adverse impact on existing park uses.
- FAA review and concurrence is obtained for the site and aircraft hazards are minimized.
- site is not within a wilderness zone or within 1 mile of a wilderness zone boundary.
- site is no more than 1 mile from the park periphery.

Operational Criteria

- site approach direction and altitude will be controlled except in an emergency.
- operator will be responsible for keeping the site clean.
- passengers may not be dropped off or left on the ground longer than 30 minutes.
- the number and timing of flights will controlled.
- a concession contract will be entered into.
- a fee will be paid to the state.
- initial contract term will be limited to one year, with subsequent contract terms to be up to four years.

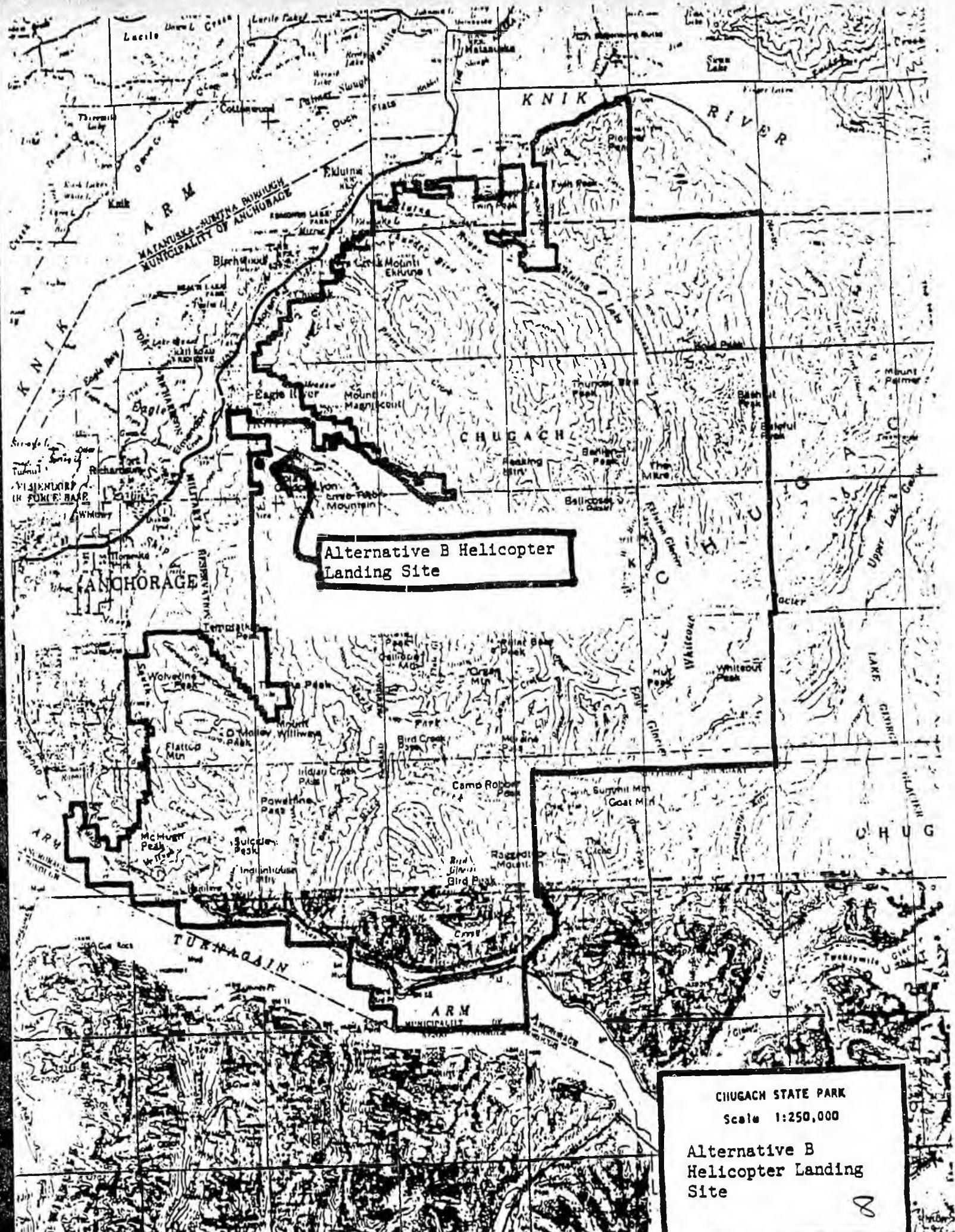
ALTERNATIVE C: UP TO THREE COMMERCIAL FLIGHTSEEING LANDING SITES IN NATURAL ZONE

This alternative would allow for up to three designated landing sites, one of which is the same as selected in Alternative B, in the natural zone, subject to the same review and mitigation measures discussed in Alternative B above.

EVALUATION OF HELICOPTER ALTERNATIVES

The matrix below evaluates each of the helicopter alternatives, using the general criteria outlined in the introductory section.

Change in:	Water Supply	Recreation Opportunity	Scenic Values	Wildlife Viewing	Wilderness Character	Natural Areas	Tourism
Alt. A	0	-	0	0	+	+	--
Alt. B	0	+	0	+	-	0	+
Alt. C	0	++	0	+	-	-	++



Alternative B Helicopter
Landing Site

CHUGACH STATE PARK
Scale 1:250,000
Alternative B
Helicopter Landing
Site
8

Legend

- ++ Highly desirable effect
- + Moderately desirable effect
- 0 Neutral effect
- Moderately negative effect
- Highly negative effect

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The preferred alternative is Alternative A, which prohibits commercial flight-seeing landings in the park. Although there are means of mitigating the negative site specific impacts associated with helicopter operations (as outlined in the site selection and operational criteria in Alternative B), public concern and opposition to any commercial helicopter use of the park continues. This opposition affects public confidence in state park programs. The public does not separate the issue of site specific helicopter landings from the broader issue of whether helicopter landings are an appropriate park activity. The division has concluded that the broader issue is a legitimate public concern sufficient to reject any and all applications for helicopter landings privileges in the park.

PRELIMINARY DECISION BY THE DIRECTOR TO CONTRACT FOR
HELICOPTER SIGHTSEEING SERVICES IN CHUGACH STATE PARK

REQUEST FOR SERVICES

Alaska Helicopters, Inc., requested in a letter dated 1-15-87 a Park Use Permit for recreational helicopter landings in Chugach State Park. The focus of the request was to establish a scheduled sight-seeing service for the tourist season of 1987 with landings in a specific location in Chugach State Park. The scope of operations was outlined to be generally 10 trips a week with four customers per flight flown to a small knob northwest of Highland Mountain specifically located in Section 30, T14N R1W, S.M., at longitude 149 degrees, 31 minutes and latitude 61 degrees, 18 minutes, near the "River" VABM. The letter outlined a series of justifications for this site, hereafter referred to as "River." In a preliminary review by Chugach State Park staff the permit request was an accurate assessment of the qualities of this site. The "River" site proposed was within 1/8 of a mile of the park boundary, within 1 mile of traditional access routes used by military and civilian pilots for entry into the Anchorage area and is an area with almost no impact on other park users by the "flyover." The request further stated economic reasons for providing service and implies a ready or developing market for it.

This request, along with a previous request for helicopter skiing in Chugach State Park in the winter of 1980/81, exhibits a demand for recreational helicopter landings in the park. Staff reports and public complaints received during the summer of 1986 on possible illegal helicopter sight-seeing landings, along with newspaper advertisements for these services provide evidence that there exists a demand for this type of public service and activity in Chugach State Park.

ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

The Alaska State Park System's Statewide Framework places aircraft landing in the category of "conditionally compatible" in natural zones. The area in question near Highland Mountain is in the Natural Zone of Chugach State Park. The specific activity of helicopter landings for sight-seeing is not mentioned in the Chugach State Park Master Plan, but the closely related activity of helicopter skiing is categorized as appropriate in the Recreation Zone as well as in the Natural Zone. Clearly there are no exclusions in the planning documents for this activity at the "River" site.

The state laws affecting a decision on this issue are 11 AAC 18.010 Park Use Permits, and AS 41.21.123 Incompatible Use Prohibited. The statute allows the Commissioner to adopt regulations to prohibit or restrict incompatible uses. The regulation states that, "A permit is required for the following activities in a state park:

- (7) soliciting, selling, or peddling services described in 11 AAC 12.300.
- (8) using a state park for recurring or permanent motorized access, including access by aircraft."

The nature of this type of service to the public, by its very obvious and many impacts, presents immediate management concerns. The determination on the direction state parks will take concerning this activity will be based on protection of state park resources and protection of other public uses that would be affected by helicopter operations in Chugach State Park. The noise, visual disturbance, disappointment of recreation expectations, and violation of reasonable expectations of solitude weigh heavily on the side of control of this activity in the management zones that permit this activity.

The decision as to whether to allow this activity at all, and to what extent, hinges on our ability to provide a quality experience for park users while protecting the park resources.

A past decision written by Park Director Chip Dennerlein in 1981 on heli-skiing stated that it was "not a decision about the appropriateness of helicopter skiing." It was a decision on "the conducting of a motorized activity in a specific area of Chugach State Park...which has been designated for non-motorized and wilderness management through a publically (sic) accountable process." This past decision does not clearly speak to the present issues, since the "River" site is two miles from the nearest wilderness zone.

Inspection of the "River" site by park staff and Army natural resource managers indicates that concerns for wildlife expressed during the 2-9-87 Advisory Board meeting were in fact not so severe or restrictive as to prohibit landings. If a helicopter came in from due West above the landing site and left the site to the West without descending there would be no measurable impact on existing sheep and moose populations. The Advisory Board recommendations against landings depended heavily on supposed adverse wildlife impacts.

Local residents of the South Fork Community Council do not object to helicopters landing near the "River" site. They only requested that helicopters not fly through the developed portion of South Fork.

Pedestrians within one mile in any direction of the "River" site would see and hear a number of man-made developments and activities. The Glenn Highway, Hiland Road, and flyway for hundreds of small planes per day are all visible and audible from this site. Close-up developments include the Nike Site and private dwellings along Hiland Road. A hiker could not reasonably expect solitude at the "River" site.

If recreational helicopter landings are allowed at the "River" site, those people who wish to fly in a noisy motorized vehicle will obtain the quality of experience they have selected. It is an experience that qualifies in many ways as a unique recreational experience. The quality of the experience is truly in the eye of the beholder. While similar views may be obtained with other road accesses, those people with only a few hours of time and a little more money to spend would be glad to have the recreational opportunity to land on alpine tundra where Denali is sometimes visible. The restrictions of insurance, FAA regulations, and contract stipulations would insure a quality, safe experience while protecting the park resource.

DECISION

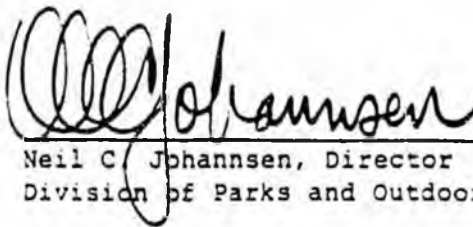
It is my decision at this time to concur with the advice of the Chugach Advisory Board in their response to Alaska Helicopters' presentation at the board meeting on 2-9-87. The permit request for this service was denied on 2-13-87 based on the management decision to limit the number of permits to be available for this type of service. Without limitations on the number of landings or individual permittees, the "River" site could become a cheap, legal place to practice takeoffs and landings for all private helicopters in the Anchorage area. The "River" site could be overwhelmed with flights during a cruise ship's stay in Anchorage when a large number of people might desire this service. State regulation 11 AAC 18.030 (a)(4) states clearly that the Director may negotiate a permit for a commercial activity if:

the director finds that there is no need to limit the number of individuals or firms providing the service to protect public use of the state park or to protect state park resources.

Since there is a need to limit the number of permits, the Division must use the contracting process as regulated in 11 AAC 14. The advisory board further recommended that the Division should investigate the possibilities of contracting for recreational helicopter landings in Chugach State Park.

It is my preliminary decision to choose the "River" site as appropriate for recreational helicopter landings, and to advertise a contract for public bid to establish this service for the 1987 tourist season. The contract will be written to allow just compensation to the State of Alaska for use of its resources and to adequately restrict the activities of the contractor to protect the resources.

It is my desire to continue the full review of this process by the public through the Chugach State Park Citizens Advisory Board. I am requiring that the Superintendent of Chugach State Park keep all members of the Advisory Board updated on the contract preparation process. Advisory Board input into the development of the contract will be requested.

 25 Feb. '87

Neil C. Johannsen, Director
Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation

HELICOPTER FLIGHTSEEING WITH LANDING SITES
IN
CHUGACH STATE PARK

prepared by
Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
2.5.87

Background

The Division of Parks has received an application from an Anchorage based helicopter company requesting a permit to land sightseers just inside the park boundary near Eagle River. The Division is reviewing this proposal and is seeking the advice of the Chugach Park Advisory Board, the general public and the flightseeing industry. The area proposed for this activity is in the park's natural zone which, according to the park's master plan allows helicopter based skiing if there are no overriding conflicts with resources or other park users. The plan also states that natural zones are managed for low impact forms of recreation and serve to act as a buffer between recreation development and wilderness zones. The plan does not specifically address helicopter flightseeing but it is the opinion of staff that it is similar to helicopter skiing in term of impacts (except for the difference in season). The Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework states that aircraft landings are conditionally compatible with natural zones. It further states that natural zones are established to provide moderate to low impact forms of recreation.

Helicopter flightseeing is an increasingly popular activity with summertime visitors to Anchorage. The trip cost is between \$59 and \$245 per person. There are presently at least three companies offering this type of service to the public. Similar trips to the Mendenhall Glacier in Juneau have increased dramatically in terms of customers and numbers of firms offering the service. The Forest Service has stopped issuing special use permits for the activity is evaluating methods to limit the number of operators.

Current park regulations prohibit the landing of aircraft in Chugach State Park except at Bold airstrip and on Eklutna Lake (11 AAC 12.100 & 11 AAC 20.020). Commercial activities in the park are prohibited unless authorized by a commercial use permit (11 AAC 18.030) or a concession contract (11 AAC 14.200). The Divisions does not have the authority to regulate aircraft that are in the air over the park.

Problems associated with similar activities on other public lands include:

a) too many flights in the air leading to congestion and recently in Grand Canyon National Park, a mid air collision.

- b) other user groups complaining about noise and mechanized intrusions into an area they hiked into;
- c) adverse impacts on wildlife; and
- d) complaints from neighbors about overflights.

Pro and Con Analysis

Pro:

- 1) activity provides an alternative means of access for visitors to the park (particularly handicapped or the elderly);
- 2) activity can generate revenues for the management of the park;
- 3) by placing operators under concession contracts it may become easier to get control of existing illegal landings. It is expected that the legal operators will provide information on illegal operators. Also permits or concession contracts can be written to require operators to maintain certain altitudes and flightpaths while over the park (i.e. by contractual agreement the state can control flights which it can't do under existing law);
- 4) contracts or permits can be written to require helicopter air time for park management activities in lieu of a portion of the fee to state;
- 5) operators can assist in park management by reporting problems in the park, taking wildlife counts, or assisting in rescues;
- 6) the park's image as an important element in tourism industry is strengthened; a new constituency group (helicopter companies) is established; and political support for the park is broadened.

Con:

- 1) an energy inefficient means of accessing the park is encouraged;
- 2) significant noise and disruption of existing uses can occur if sites are not properly selected and managed;
- 3) wildlife disturbances can be significant (lambing, displacement from traditional areas);
- 4) concessionaires may develop a possessory attitude towards "their" landing site;
- 5) as a high value high profit activity in the park it may tend to dominate park management actions/attention/support to the detriment of other management activities; also, operators may form a powerful lobby to exert influence on park management.

Permit versus Concession Contract

If the decision is made to authorize the activity the division will have to decide between regulating it through a commercial use permit (11 AAC 18.030) or through a concession contract (11 AAC 14.200). A permit can be used if it is decided not to limit the number of operators. If it is decided to limit the number of

operators then a concession contract will have to be used. Following is the process for issuing a concession contract:

1. Request for letters of interest are sought from the private sector to determine the nature and extent of interest in providing helicopter access into the park. Map of park is sent out which shows areas that are closed to the use (i.g. wilderness zone and areas where we know user conflicts will occur from overflights noise etc. or where wildlife sensitivities exist. You should start working on this map.

2. Letters of interest are reviewed to determine the best location(s) and how many operators would be allowed at each landing site and/or total number of landings takeoffs per day.

3. Contract terms are developed and an RFP is prepared for advertising. (use USFS permits from Juneau as example/ identify all wildlife and user problems and deal with them through contract term procedures). examples of other contract terms are control of flight paths and altitudes/ human wastes/ litter/ fuel discharge while draining water from tanks/ reporting problems & park conditions observed/ ranger ride along inspections/ services to parks as part of fee/ insurance/ etc.

4. RFP advertised and sent to interested parties

5. RFP received by concessions review committee.

6. Apparent successful contractor selected

7. Final contract negotiated

8. Concessionaire begins operations and field staff monitors and manages operation.



Our Ref 1270

Your Ref

(907) 243-3404

HELICOPTERS, INC.

P.O. BOX 190283

ANCHORAGE, AK 99519-0283

TELEK. 25372

Subsidiary of COLUMBIA HELICOPTERS, INC. • P.O. BOX 0600, PORTLAND, OREGON 97208 • (503) 678-1222

January 15, 1987

State of Alaska
Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
3601 C Street
Anchorage, AK 99503

Dear Mr. Garry;

Alaska Helicopters Incorporated wishes to submit a "State Park Use Permit for Commercial Activities."

We would like you to consider a helicopter landing area on the edge of the park for the enjoyment of natural scenery. The landing area would not be used as a ferry system for heli-hiking, but rather a spot that will enhance public recreation for a broader range of people who cannot physically access a similar area or have the time in their vacation schedule to drive to a similar area.

We estimate five to ten trips, (landings) per week, a stay of fifteen to thirty minutes ground time with four people, (plus pilot) at the location at any one time. The helicopter proposed would be a Bell Jet Ranger.

The proposed area is located in T. 14 N. R. 1 W. with a longitude of 149 degrees 31' and latitude of 61 degrees 13'. It is often referred to as Tri-Station River.

We are proposing this area because it is on the edge of the park, is near an aviation access route used by military and civilian pilots for entry into the Anchorage Area and will minimize, if not completely rule out, any impact of "fly-over" of the park. A log of operations would be reported weekly, monthly or upon demand to your office.

RECEIVED

JAN 20 1987

CHUGACH DISTRICT

This company complies with the CODE OF ETHICS of the Helicopter Association of America.

Member of the Alaska Air Carriers Association.

State of Alaska
Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
January 15, 1987
Page 2

We are currently in contact with the Corps of Engineers regarding a landing area outside of the park. It is however, on "military owned" land and according to regulation "cannot be used for commercial purposes".

As a commercial entity, we are motivated by profitability and service. In some fashion, flight time is revenue. The proposed area is on the limits we can fly and still maintain a source of revenue and provide an experience to the tourist at a fair and equitable price.

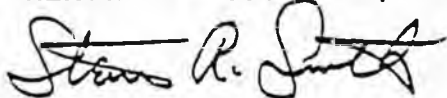
We are also oriented to keeping a stable work force and continual growth. We estimate, three if not five full time positions will be required in our firm by the approval of this permit. We know that may not seem like alot, but in this day and age it is a boost to the local economy.

Alaska Helicopters has been in Alaska since 1951. We feel we are familiar with the State and have taken part in numerous projects considered "Environmentally Sensative" and have seen that this type of project can go hand in hand with no degradation to the environment and yet provide access to people who otherwise would not be able to share in this experience.

We appreciate your review of our application and if so desired, would welcome the opportunity to answer questions regarding our proposal with the Chugach State Park Citizens Advisory Board. We await your reply.

Sincerely,

ALASKA HELICOPTERS, INC.



Steven R. Smith
Director of Operations

SRS/ah

Alaska State Parks
Park Use Permit for Commercial Activities
Permit Application

Please Print

1. Name of Business ALASKA HELICOPTERS, INC.
2. Address of Business P.O. BOX 130283 ANCHORAGE, AK 99510-0283
3. Telephone Number (907) 243-3404
4. Business Manager, if Not Owner Steven R. Smith/Director of Operations
5. Names and Addresses of All Owners Rex I. Bishop, Anchorage
Wes LeMatta, Portland (Address same as in #2 above)

6. Check Type of Activities Proposed Air Taxi/Tour Guide
 Backpacking/Hiking Transportation Only Hunting Fishing
 Mountaineering River Float Trips Water Touring (i.e.,
 kayaking, canoeing, motorized boat tour) Ski Touring Other

7. Please indicate below the park unit(s), general areas within the park(s) you plan to operate and the type of service you would offer in each area (if they differ by area or park unit). Include means of access, stock use, if any, campsite locations, group size, etc. Attach additional pages, if necessary.

<u>Name of Park Unit</u>	<u>Specific Location and Date</u>	<u>Proposed Service(s)</u>
Chugach State Park	T 14 N R 1 W Long. 149° 31' Lat. 61° 18'	Helicopter Landing

* See attached cover letter for service description

3. QUALIFICATIONS

A. Briefly list previous commercial activities similar to those allowed by this permit. List last years first, information for the previous three years will be sufficient. Use other side, if necessary.

1986 - Heli Tours Anchorage, Zink, Seward (Passenger Ship)

B. List specialized training applicable to this operation.

Commercial Pilot Certificate as per FAA Regulations

9. Will any of the commercial activities proposed occur on or be based on private lands within a state park unit?

A. Amount of land N/A

B. Location N/A

C. Who has title? N/A

D. What percentage of the commercial service will take place on private lands (approximate): N/A

E. What percentage of the commercial service will take place on state park lands? N/A

10. Do you plan to place any temporary structures or caches on state park land or water? If so, where and what type of structure(s)?

NONE

11. List the license or "N" numbers, makes, models, and colors of all vehicles, boats, trailers, or aircraft you will be operating in conjunction with your activities.

Only 1 helicopter is to be used, it is possible that any one of the following could be chosen: N2300Y, N2300Z, N20401, N371AH, N4770R, N7982J, N3929B, N222AC, N38935, N38993, N6013G. Our company colors are gold, orange and white

12. Please submit the following attachments with your application:

A. State Business License (SIC code)

8. QUALIFICATIONS

A. Briefly list previous commercial activities similar to those allowed by this permit. List last years first, information for the previous three years will be sufficient. Use other side, if necessary.

1986 - Heli Tours Anchorage, Alaska, Seward (Passenger Skins)

B. List specialized training applicable to this operation.

Commercial Pilot Certificate as per FAA Regulations

9. Will any of the commercial activities proposed occur on or be based on private lands within a state park unit?

A. Amount of land N/A

B. Location N/A

C. Who has title? N/A

D. What percentage of the commercial service will take place on private lands (approximate): N/A %

E. What percentage of the commercial service will take place on state park lands? N/A %

10. Do you plan to place any temporary structures or caches on state park land or water? If so, where and what type of structure(s)?

NO

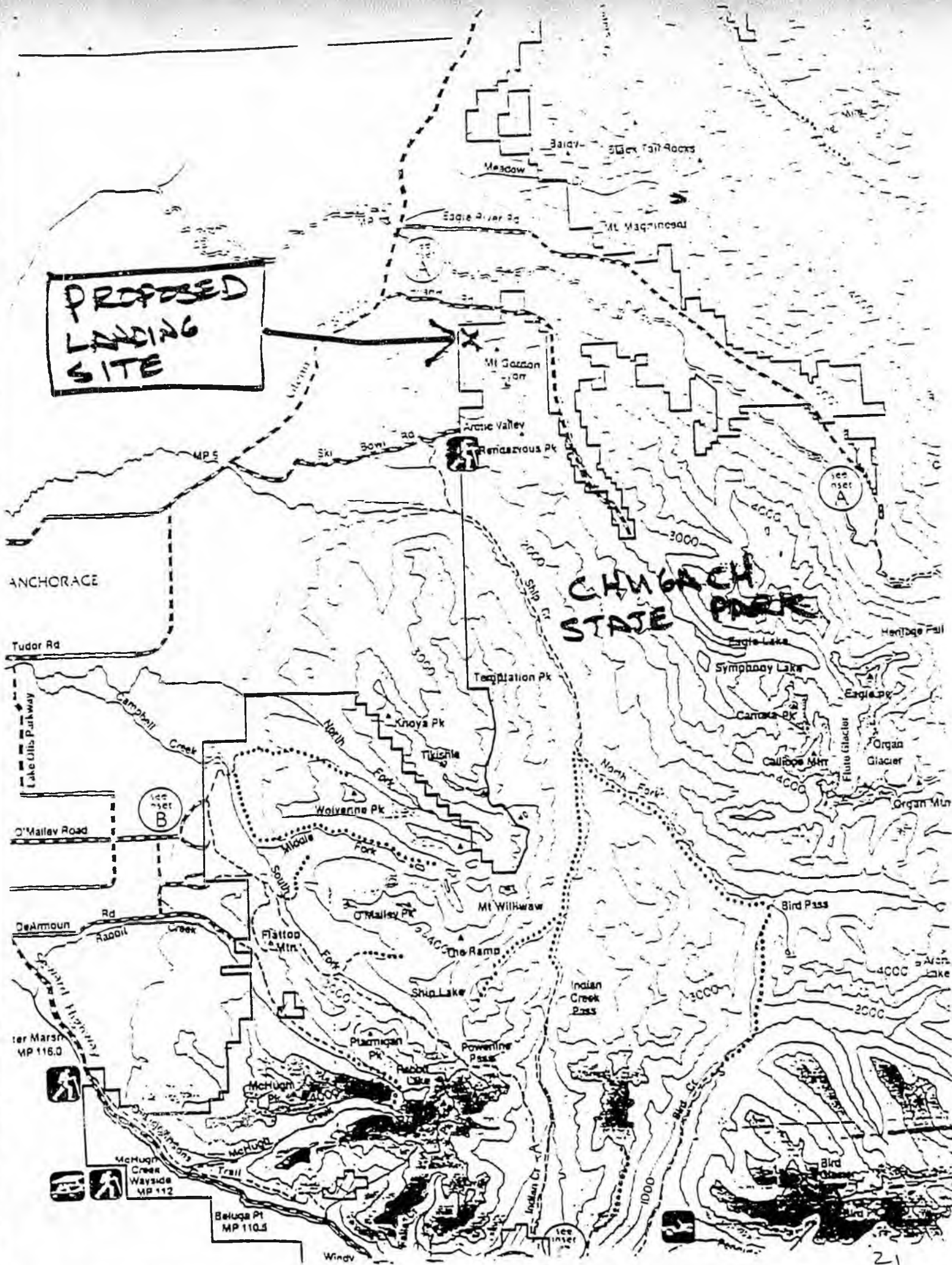
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12. Please submit the following attachments with your application:

A. State Business License (SIC code)

**PROPOSED
LANDING
SITE**



CHUGACH STATE PARK

ANCHORAGE

Tudor Rd

O'Malley Road

DeAmoun Rd

Marine Hwy
MP 116.0

McHugh
Creek
Wayside
MP 112

Beluga Pt
MP 110.5

see insert

see insert
A

see insert
B

on the cover

Alaska from above in helicopter

by Nancy Killoran
Times Writer

For visitors with a short amount of time to see the largest state in the nation, or residents who want a taste of the rugged wilderness without putting up mountain trails, helicopter flightseeing trips may be the answer.

For between \$59 and \$245 per person, one of several local helicopter companies will lift visitors above the highways and hiking trails for a bird's eye view of the city, mountains, valleys, glaciers and inlets that surround Anchorage.

ERA Helicopters Flightseeing Adventures, HeliTour Alaska, Alaska Classic Tours based in Anchorage and Soloy Heli Ops, Inc. in Wasilla all offer flightseeing trips.

• Alaska Classic Tours offers champagne flights using Alaska Helicopters' four- and six-passenger helicopters. The tour offers views of the Alaska Range, Chugach Mountains, Cook Inlet and a panoramic view of the city for \$59. For information call 276-1226.

• ERA Helicopters Flightseeing Adventures has two Anchorage-based tours. The All Around Anchorage, a 25-minute trip for \$75 per person, also features a panorama of the Anchorage Bowl as it sits between Turnagain Arm and Knik Arm.

ERA's Southern Perspective, 55 minutes for \$130 per person, begins with the sights of the Anchorage and then heads into the Chugach Mountain wilderness of forested valleys, alpine meadows, Ice Age glaciers, rivers and streams as well as the proposed sites for the 1992 Winter Olympic events. For information call 248-4422.

ERA also offers helicopter flightseeing trips in Juneau, Talkeetna, Fairbanks, Valdez and Prudhoe Bay.

• HeliTour Alaska, an in-house tour development and marketing arm for Alaska Helicopters, offers three trip choices ranging from \$125 per person for the one-hour Cheechako tour to \$245 per person for the two and-a-half-hour Sourdough or Explorer I. For more information call 694-3750 or 213-3404.

The Cheechako trip soars from Anchorage to the ridges of the Chugach Mountains where the aircraft lands so passengers can get out and take close-up photographs of Dall sheep or mountain goats.

The Sourdough takes its riders down Turnagain Arm to hover over Alyeska Resort and Portage Glacier before they land on the glacier itself and enjoy a selection of Alaskan hors d'oeuvres. This tour offers an optional stop at Crow Creek Gold Mine for passengers to pan for gold.

Through the Explorer tour, riders discover Alaska through the Knik Arm, the Matanuska Colony, Lake George glaciers and Eklutna Lake. The touchdown offers the opportunity to hike, spot sheep and savor Alaskan hors d'oeuvres, and get the photos of a lifetime.

• Soloy Helicopter Tours and Heli-hiking begins in the Matanuska Valley, an hour-and-15-minute drive from Anchorage. The 70-minute \$150 tour features the Matanuska and Susitna valleys, Whiteout Glacier, Upper Lake George and Knik Glacier and includes a 15-minute stop near the face of Knik Glacier or where the passenger chooses to stop.

Soloy's Talkeetna Mountains Hatcher Pass flight travels across the green Matanuska-Susitna Valley to the wildflower-covered mountains to see glaciers, wildlife and hidden mountain streams. A highlight of the 50 minute flight is the flyover of the Independence Mine State Historical Park and touchdown to dine at the Hatcher Pass Lodge. For more information call 376-3434.



Times file photo

In minutes flightseeing tours like those by ERA Helicopters like adventurers from urban Alaska to rugged wilderness.

22



Alaska Environmental Lobby, Inc.

P.O. Box 22151 Juneau, Alaska 99802

907-586-2345

HCR 51 RE-OPENING HEARINGS FOR HELICOPTERS IN CHUGACH STATE PARK

HCR 51 reflects a flagrant disregard for a clear and systematic planning process used in managing Alaska's state parks. Recently both the Division of Parks and the Chugach State Park Citizens Advisory Board held hearings and received extensive public input on the issue of allowing helicopter landings in Chugach State Park near Eagle River. Responders who testified at these hearings overwhelmingly opposed allowing landings even at the one site which had been under consideration by DNR. In addition, nearly 80% of those writing individual letters opposed **any** commercial helicopter landing activity for either recreational or sightseeing pursuits.

HCR 51 requests the Commissioner of DNR, a **public** official in charge of **public** lands to discount a mandated **public** process, in order to accommodate a **private** pursuit for profit which is opposed by local users and adjacent community residents.

AEL is opposed to HCR 51 for the following reasons:

- Public hearings on the issue were already held in four locations in the vicinity of Chugach State Park.
- Public review and comment records have been open on this issue for eight months, from February to October 1987.
- The Anchorage Daily News had a special public forum encouraging letters on the debate.
- The appropriate public hearing process has already consumed staff time. Re-opening this process is redundant and there are other pressing issues which have not received attention already.

HCR 51 undermines the public input process which has clearly outlined the incompatibility of helicopter use in a natural area. It requires a duplication of effort at public expense. AEL opposes this legislation and urges DNR to stand by its conclusions published in the Chugach State Park Master Plan Amendments, October 1987.

Issue paper prepared by Patty Brown, 30 March 1988.

ALASKA CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT • ALASKA CHAPTER, SIERRA CLUB • JUNEAU GROUP, SIERRA CLUB • SITKA GROUP, SIERRA CLUB
 KNIK GROUP, SIERRA CLUB • DENALI GROUP, SIERRA CLUB • ANCHORAGE AUDUBON SOCIETY • ARCTIC AUDUBON SOCIETY
 DENALI CITIZENS' COUNCIL • ALASKA FRIENDS OF THE EARTH • JUNEAU AUDUBON SOCIETY • KACHEMAK BAY CONSERVATION SOCIETY
 KENAI PENINSULA AUDUBON SOCIETY • KODIAK AUDUBON SOCIETY • LYNN CANAL CONSERVATION • ALASKA WILDLIFE ALLIANCE
 SITKA CONSERVATION SOCIETY • NORTHERN ALASKA ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER • SOUTHEAST ALASKA CONSERVATION COUNCIL
 KNIK KANOERS AND KAYAKERS

March 10, 1988

Dear Mr. [Name]:
I am writing to you regarding [Topic].

[Text]

[Text]

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March 30, 1988

House Resources Committee
Room 124, State Capitol Building
Juneau, Alaska 99811

RE: House Concurrent Resolution No. 51 (HCR 51)

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee:

I am writing in support of HCR 51 which is scheduled to come before you on Thursday, March 31, 1988.

I am an avid backpacker and user of Chugach State Park. I can see no reason not to allow helicopter sightseeing overflights and brief landings in the peripheral areas of the park in order to increase access to this marvelous area for those who otherwise would not be able to enjoy the environment of the Chugach Mountains. I offer the following points in support of my position:


- ° Chugach State Park is a multiple use area. It is not a wilderness. In winter snowmachines (mechanized equipment - like helicopters) roam throughout the park. There appears no logical reason to preclude helicopters from sightseeing flights in the summer.
- ° The areas being proposed for brief helicopter landings will not suffer any environmental damage as no site improvements are required and occupation of the sites will be brief. Operators will be required (under penalty of permit revocation) to keep the areas clean and free from litter. Impacts on wildlife will be minimal to non-existent, snowmachines present a far greater threat to wildlife than do brief helicopter landings.

- ° The areas being proposed for helicopter landings are on the periphery of the park and the interior of the park area will not be penetrated. Too bad the same thing cannot be said for snowmachines.

- ° The proposal to allow brief helicopter landings makes the park accessible to everyone, if only for a short period of time. It will provide a larger tour base for an ever increasing number of tourists, in keeping with the objectives of the State Division of Tourism.

Thank you for your consideration of these points.

Yours very truly,



R. C. Gardner
P.O. Box 190361
Anchorage, Alaska 99519
907-276-4302 (Days)

RCG/fbw