

**HJR**

**28**

To the Senate Transportation Committee Members:

Denali Citizen's Council is an all volunteer organization started in 1974 to act as a watchdog over Denali National Park. We are not connected with the National Park Service, but serve as a vocal group of citizens who detect and publicize problems concerning Denali National Park.

Denali Citizen's Council strongly opposes HJR 28. A northern route into Kantishna (sometimes linked with the Healy to McGrath road) would not be good for Denali National Park visitors, the wildlife, or state tourism. Everytime this idea has been studied, it has been soundly rejected.

**\*\*\*Studies recommend AGAINST Kantishna development \*\*\***

The question of overcrowding in the Park has been studied for years by the Park Service. In February 1992 the National Park Service released the Denali Access Task Force Report, where the second road was the most prominent issue and recommended that a new road into the Kantishna area of Denali National Park is not justified. The task force supported development on the southside of Denali and in other parks. (press release enclosed)

The Kantishna Resource Management Plan for Denali released in July of 1990 states that the Park Service should acquire all inholdings in the Kantishna Hills under a phased acquisition plan. That "NPS is particularly concerned by commercial development that would cause a major shift in focus of the park experience away from a nature preserve where wildlife viewing along the Denali park road corridor is a primary resource, to a hub for access to commercial recreational facilities.

"If the Kantishna area were to continue to develop unchecked, the increase of traffic to that area is inevitable. Without restrictions on the level of traffic, wildlife viewings would continue to drop. As exemplified by the advertisements of the businesses in the local area, the major attraction is the wildlife viewing in Denali. If that were no longer available, all local businesses would lose revenue, including any facilities that had been developed in Kantishna."

The Park Service is committed to buying privately held parcels in Kantishna to protect valuable wildlife habitat and prevent further development. The mining claim acquisition program currently has a budget of 98 million, including \$3 million appropriated for fiscal 1993. (Boyd Sponaugle, NPS Realty Specialist, 257-2584)

**\*\*\* Southside Denali is the answer \*\*\***

The Denali National Park General Management Plan discusses southside development as a practical alternative for increased visitor use. "The escalating demands on Denali's resources,

coupled with the need to provide a visitor experience equal to the resources, is the the single most critical problem facing park managers. The solution presented in this plan is to expand recreational opportunities on the south side of Denali.... additional demand cannot be accomodated in the existing park road corridor without a significant decline in the visible wildlife, but it can be accommodated if the south side is develeped as an alternative destination for visitors. Together the north and south sides will offer a large range of visitor experiences geared to the full complement of Denali's outstanding natural resources. Develeped in this way, the parks should be able to meet visitor demands for many years." (pg. 12. General Management Plan, 1986) There are currently plans for southside development, which is already on road and rail lines. Why would the State want a very expensive road into Kantishna federal land when there are options on state controlled land!!!!

**\*\*\* Environmental Damage to Kantishna \*\*\***

"A northern access route through the park would have severe environmental impacts. The Stampede Trail crosses the denning areas of the Toklat and Savage wolf packs, the winter range of the Denali caribou herd, the major movement corridor along the Toklat River for both wolves and caribou, and many miles of pristine country. The benefits to visitors of having expanded services in the northern portion of the park would not justify the ecological damage." (page 32, General Management Plan, 1986)

**\*\*\* NOT A ZERO FISCAL NOTE!! \*\*\*** HJR 28 proposes that the private sector will build a new road or railroad. The estimates from the Dept. of Transportation acknowledge the road would cost \$80-120 million! (Promoter Thomas Engineering of Fairbanks estimates a railroad at \$216 million) How can private industry do this without State money? They won't. Even though the State has not done a comprehensive study on the need for another road into Kantishna, DOT is spending \$200,000 of public money on preliminary engineering studies. The State of Alaska does not have right-of-way into Kantishna. The contested right-of-way assertions will cost thousands of dollars in litigation.

HJR 28 is based on erroneous information and faulty assumptions, and will HARM Denali National Park. HJR 28 is a time wasting diversion, trying to coerce the Park Service into overdevelopment instead of working on Denali State Park plans, where the state would have control and a real solution. Your vote against HJR 28 will wisely encourage development in other parts of the state, and not in Kantishna where we need it the least!

Sincerely,

*Lenore Sappington*

Lenore Sappington  
Denali Citizen's Council

NEWS RELEASE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

# NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
February 19, 1992

CONTACT: John Quinley  
Public Affairs (907) 257-2696

## DENALI TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS NO NEW ROAD

A task force of high-level National Park Service officials has found that with some improvements, the existing road in Denali National Park and Preserve is adequate and that a second road to Kantishna is not justified.


The question of a second road was the most prominent issue for the task force, which was appointed last year by James Ridenour, director of the National Park Service. The recommendation is contained in the task force's report to the director, which was released this week.

The recommendations are the opinion of task force members, and have not been endorsed by Ridenour or the Department of the Interior.

The task force was directed to examine how the park has balanced the protection of natural resources with increased public demand for access to the park interior, to consider the safety and adequacy of the existing park road, and to consider alternative access to Kantishna, the major collection of private inholdings in the park's interior.

Public comment, testimony from private industry and the state of Alaska, and research into the park's mandates were used to reach the conclusions. The recommendations are aimed at protecting wildlife and other park values, improving safety, increasing visitation, and making park visits easier for people.

-- MORE --



The task force supported completion of the development plans for the south side of Denali, plans which will evaluate sites for a visitor center, trails, and other facilities. The four draft concepts for development were outlined in a workbook made public February 14. Public comment will run through April 10, 1992.

The task force also supported the Alaska Region's facility development priorities for parks other than Denali. "Investing in other areas -- with visitor centers, trails, campgrounds and the necessary administrative facilities -- would bring Alaska far greater, and surer, benefits than would expanded facilities in the Kantishna area," the report concluded.

The members of the task force were John M. Morehead, associate director for operations, Washington, D.C. (since appointed Alaska regional director); Don Castleberry, regional director, NPS Midwest Region; Paul Haertel, associate regional director, Alaska Region; Bob Barbee, superintendent, Yellowstone National Park; Russell W. Berry, Jr., superintendent, Denali National Park and Preserve; Elmer Hernandez and Jim Straughan, transportation planners, NPS Denver Service Center.

-- NPS --

Feb, 1992

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As one of the premier wildlife viewing areas in the National Park System, Denali National Park and Preserve is properly considered a major visitor destination for people around the world. More than any other attraction, the mountains and wildlife of Denali define Alaska for thousands of visitors and for scores of companies marketing the Last Frontier.

Like national parks in the Lower 48, Denali has struggled to accommodate growing visitation and respect the rights of inholders while at the same time has fulfilled its mission to protect the wild life, natural processes, and scenery of the park for generations to come.

The focus of that struggle has been the 90-mile park road, a narrow ribbon reaching deep into a wilderness valley. The balance struck for the past 20 years -- limited private vehicle access, provision of free public transportation and encouragement of inholders to minimize their use of the park's only road -- has, for the most part, worked.

This task force was charged with examining that balance, to consider the safety and adequacy of the park road, and to consider alternative access to Kantishna, the major collection of inholdings in the park's interior.

After several public meetings and meetings with state, local and business organizations, the task force recognized there existed a broad range of opinion regarding the future of Denali National Park. Further, the task force realized that any compromise which maintains the balance of the Park Service's mission will necessarily leave some interest groups less than satisfied.

The task force makes the following six primary recommendations to the Director of the National Park Service:

1. There is no need for an additional gravel or paved road into the Kantishna area of Denali National Park and Preserve. A new road is not justifiable in terms of its effect on the park purposes or on wildlife. Neither is it justifiable with regard to economics or visitor services. The park's major concessioner, large tour companies and smaller inholder operations oppose both a northern access route and major changes to the character of the existing road.



STATE OF ALASKA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
JUNEAU

December 10, 1992

Mr. Laurence H. Irving  
President  
Kantishna Group, Inc.  
P.O. Box 71047  
Fairbanks, AK 99707

Dear Mr. Irving:

Thank you for the briefing on your proposal to build a light rail service from Lignite into Kantishna.

I am very aware of the need to expand services in the area of the Denali National Park. We have turned away approximately half a million visitors a year who have indicated that they would spend time and dollars if there were facilities and transportation in the park. Our tourism marketing efforts have maximized our capacity in the summer season and have expanded into the "shoulder" seasons. The international interest in viewing the Northern Lights will provide even greater demand.

We consider your project a significant economic development opportunity for the Denali region. It will affect local communities in a positive way, providing construction jobs and long-term, year-round employment.

Dr. Glenn Olds, Commissioner of Natural Resources, has advised me that processing of your application for a conditional right-of-way over state land is expected to be completed in January. I also hope we can help you with the challenge of access into Denali Park.

I regard your project as one of the private sector initiatives which will help us meet our goal of increased visitor opportunities within the state. Please keep me informed of any issues and milestones as this project proceeds.

With best regards,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Walter J. Hickel".

Walter J. Hickel  
Governor

*Startafile*

# Kantishna Group Incorporated

Post Office Box 71047, Fairbanks, Alaska 99707

Tel: 907-451-7906 Fax: 970-451-6494

January 23, 1993

Rep. Tom Brice  
State Capitol Building  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Rep. Brice:

Thank you for taking interest in our Kantishna Railroad<sup>o</sup> project. As you are aware, in the last session of the Alaska Legislature the Senate passed a resolution (SJR 44) supporting increased access into Denali National Park.

The House passed a similar Resolution (HJR 83) through several committees only to have it die in the Rules Committee at sessions end.

Over the past year the subject of access into the Park has continued to be the subject of much debate. Last year the question was weather it would be road or rail access along the alignment of the old "Stampede Trail". The State DOT&PF applied for Federal Highway monies for this alignment and was informed that it would need the agreement of Federal sister agencies ( the NPS ) to gain approval.

As we understand it, this agreement was not given and the alignment was changed to a "Parks Highway - McGrath access with a spur to Kantishna" project. I suggest that if you have questions on this that you contact Mr. Steven C. Sisk, P.E., Director, Design & Construction, Northern Region (907)451-2214 , 2301 Peger Road, Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-5316.

On the other hand, the Kantishna Railroad<sup>o</sup> project is moving ahead. We have been working with State DNR and are negotiating a recognizance permit for the first thirty mile of our alignment. We have talked with the NPS and have been informed that this project could be acceptable under certain circumstances. The specific circumstances are not entirely clear at present, however, the basic understanding we have is that the Railroad / Utility Corridor we want from the NPS must meet the criteria of being "public Access to Kantishna.

Our railroad would certainly be that. As a public carrier it would meet the criteria and in fact it would provide year around access that the existing road does not. The Kantishna Railroad<sup>o</sup> project is proposed to built from private funds. A new dirt road of two lanes would cost the State US\$100-125 million and have a annual maintenance cost at today's cost of US\$ 2,500.00 per lane mile (\$5,000.00 for two) not to mention the cost of security, etc.

I have addressed the Denali Borough Assembly and Mayor and have asked for their passage of a Resolution supporting the creation of a Railroad / Utility Corridor. I include a copy of the draft of that Resolution for your perusal.

It may also be that the Railroad / Utility Corridor should be included in the law governing the pipelines, AS. 38.05. This will take more review.

We have the strong support of the Dept. of Commerce & Economic Development under Comm. Paul Fuhs, The Dept. of Natural Resources under Dr. Olds and of course the Governor. We feel it is time to move this project forward. To do so, I would be very grateful if you would consider organizing the creation of a Resolution specifically directed at the creation of a Railroad / Utility Corridor within Denali National Park.

The Kantishna Railroad is an environmentally sound and responsible method for expanding the tourism infrastructure in Alaska. It does not conflict with any of the existing tour operators in our view. As an economic development project, it meets the criteria of the new President in sustaining economic growth and is not of a resource extractive project. Tourism is one of the largest producers of foreign exchange, perhaps effecting the national balance of trade more directly than any other form of enterprise.

If you or any other members of the House or Senate need additional information please call me at any time.

With best wishes for a successful session, I am.

Sincerely yours.



Joseph N. Fields III, Dir.

Incl: Gov's ltr, maps, Denali Borough Draft Resolution.

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## Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association

### Board of Directors

Nancy Lethcoe  
President  
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Eruk's Wilderness  
Float Trips

Honorable Richard Foster  
Chairman House Transportation Committee  
State Capitol, Juneau,  
AK 99801-1182

March 2, 1993

Dear Representative

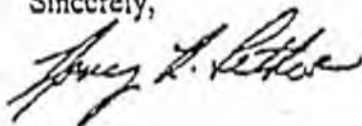
The Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association promotes the recognition and protection of Alaska's recreation and tourism resources and works for ecologically responsible recreation and tourism use of Alaska's natural resources. We have over 300 members statewide of which 180 are in the tourism business.

The Board of Directors has met and discussed House Joint Resolution No. 28. I have been instructed to write to you expressing our opposition to this resolution. Our members disagree with the statement that there is a lack of facilities at Kantishna. The current facilities have promoted a quality wilderness experience for tourists to Alaska for decades and will continue to do so. Therefore, the Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association opposes developing routes to Kantishna through some of Mt. McKinley's most spectacular wilderness area, opposes the development of a Kantishna visitor activity area, and opposes the establishment and development of a rail utility corridor into Kantishna by private corporations. Development of these routes would reduce the opportunities for quality wilderness experiences.

Our business members make their living by marketing Alaska's wilderness and other natural resources. When companies make an investment, they expect continued access to the product they market. The proposed development would deprive them of the product they have developed and marketed by changing a wilderness area into a developed area.

We respectfully request that the Transportation Committee oppose House Joint Resolution No. 28.

Sincerely,



Nancy R. Lethcoe

# Kantishna Group Incorporated

Post Office Box 71047, Fairbanks, Alaska 99707

Tel: 907-456-7906 Fax: 970-451-6494

March 9, 1993

Honorable Richard Foster, Chairman  
House Transportation Committee  
State Capitol Building  
Juneau, Alaska 99801- 1182

Dear Mr. Foster:

We wish to thank the members of the House Transportation Committee for their good work on behalf of all Alaskans and especially for their consideration of HJR 28.

I want to start today by quoting Chapter 1 of Title 16 of Federal law which establishes the National Park Service. " The Service ... shall promote and regulate the use of Federal areas known as...national parks, monuments and reservations... by such means and measures as to conform to the fundamental purpose of said parks, monuments and reservations, **which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in a manner and by such a means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.** "

The Kantishna Group Incorporated (KGI) has proposed the construction of a tourism railroad from Lignite to Kantishna, Alaska. The project would include the construction of terminal facilities at both ends of the railroad and would be financed privately.

## Problems:

When Denali National Park was expanded in the 1980's and Denali became a Park and Preserve and a Wilderness Area. Inholders maintained their rights of access for themselves and their guests. The original Park became Wilderness, with the exception of the existing park road which bisects it and land around Wonder Lake. In effect, there are two Wilderness Areas. Because the road was built to access the Park interior by the NPS and not to handle thousands of busses each season it is said to have reached its "carrying capacity".

To correct this problem some have suggested creating a second road, but as visitor volume grows, so does the potential for damage a road might do to the Park eco-systems. The 1965 Federal law on Park concessions states; "***Congress hereby finds the preservation of park values requires such public accommodations, facilities and services as have to be provided in those areas should be provided under carefully controlled safeguards against unregulated and indiscriminate use, so that heavy visitation not unduly impair these values...***". A second road would be clearly in conflict with this statement. The Kantishna Railroad would provide the controlled and discriminating access and distinctly different tourism activities necessary for the Park service to support this significant change in the 75 year operation of Denali National Park.

Alaska, is a popular destination, it is safe, accessible, quick to reach by air or sea, has no terrorism, English is spoken and no currency conversion are required. Alaska has spent a great deal of money on marketing and now sees the visitor / tourism industry as the third largest sector of its private economy with a growth rate of 4% to 7%.

**Mitigating adverse impact of traffic on Park road:** A rail / utility corridor along the northern routing suggested by KGI, will provide discriminating and controlled public access to Kantishna. This will allow the NPS to exercise controls on the Park road and reduce the impact on the adjacent wilderness area.

It would be foolhardy to conclude that visitor volumes or tourism will decrease over the next thirty years. It is irresponsible for tourism in Alaska to be constrained by a lack of infrastructure or to be discounted as a major factor in Alaska's economy. The Kantishna Railroad will eliminate the "choke" point and provide high quality low impact access into the Park. The Kantishna Historic Visitor District will re-focus tours for viewing Mt. McKinley, historic preservation, conservation education, outdoor recreation and wildlife.

**Zoning:** The Kantishna Historic Tourism Zone (KHTZ) could provide a mechanism for zoning privately held land in the Kantishna region. It could be organized as a special zoning district of the Denali Borough or as a Port Authority of the Borough. Agreements could be made between the Borough and the NPS, as in other states for the Park Service to enforce policies established by the Borough. Clearly, the Kantishna region is a special place where assessments of the historic places and objects should be made and historic preservation and authentic restoration should be undertaken.

**Kantishna Historic Tourism Zone:**

KGI has suggested the creation of a Kantishna Historic Tourism Zone (KHTZ). The purpose of this zone would be to create an area in which tourism facilities could be developed under strict zoning. Several thousand acres of land in Kantishna is privately owned, some in patented mining claims with more in application for Patent. Tourism operations currently exist in Kantishna and others are being planned. The KHTZ could be a manifestation of the concept of "Zones of Confluence" where the statutory mandate to the National Park Service to deliver the Parks to the people while protecting them could be accomplished. This concept is similar to the Primary Tourism Zone suggested by AVA studies. The KHTZ could produce revenues in the form of user fees, tariffs, rents, taxes etc., offsetting its cost of operation.

The KHTZ would provide the private property inholders in the Park with the ability to utilize their holdings for tourism activities while at the same time eliminating the need for the NPS to continue the already implemented, very costly program of buying them out. We have been advised that the National Park Service has some zoning powers.

The Denali Borough could create a special or enterprise zone or even a Port Authority in the Kantishna area to be used to control important developmental factors such as:

- A. Architectural standards.
- B. Solid waste.
- C. Trails and activities on them.
- D. Quality and safety of area developments.
- E. Historic Preservation, including the authentic restoration of the Kantishna townsite and perhaps the historic Stampede Mine.

**Location and Route:** The Kantishna Railroad(KRR) is proposed as an environmentally sound and sensible mass transit system creating access to the Park interior along a northern route. Approximately 90 miles in length, **no portion of the railroad will pass through the wilderness portion of Denali.** It will be designed for tourism with enough freight capacity to service Park Service, inholders and the railroad operations in the Kantishna area.

**True Access To The Park:**

Each passenger coach will have two decks with full handicapped access, perhaps including a lift for upper deck wheelchair access. Terminals will be equipped for walk-on and roll-on passenger loading. Compliance with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (A.D.A.) will bring many benefits to our operation. We feel Eco-Tourism is not just for the physically fit. The majority of our Alaskan visitors feel a very close relationship to the land even though they may not be physically able to hike over it.

**Environmental Conservation and Recycling:**

The control of sewage and solid waste will be accomplished through the use of low water, foam operated toilets coupled to composting systems manufactured in Alaska. This process will dramatically reduce the use of water and reduce potentially hazardous sanitary problems. Solid waste control will be through a vigorous and up-to-date recycling program and use of the proposed regional facility at Nenana, now being planned.

**Power Systems:**

The system is proposed as an electric traction (powered) railroad similar to nearly all the train systems in Europe. These systems facilitate communication and power transmission, but until all question relating to this concept are cleared, we must also consider diesel-electric. Our current plans call for the use of standard gauge rails and couplings to facilitate an intertie with the Alaska Railroad. We have discussed with the A.R.R., the utilization of A.R.R.'s maintenance facilities to reduce costs.

Now I would like to comment on the letters which have been sent in opposition to the passage of HJR 28.

While the Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Assoc. and Alaska Wildland Adventures do represent a portion of the touring public, that portion is only a small part of the tourism industry in Alaska.

They appear to represent only those in the economic class that can afford the specialized trips they provide.

One calls the north route we propose 1. "lowland, bog areas that would be uninteresting to potential visitors." and the other opposes 2. "developing routes through some of Mt. McKinley's most spectacular wilderness areas. They go on to oppose development by private corporations, yet they say 3. "When companies make an investment, they expect continued access to the product they market. The proposed development would deprive them of the product they have developed and marketed by changing a wilderness area into a developed area."

1. The route proposed is beautiful Alaskan interior viewing which will provide longer and better viewing of the Mt. Mckinley.
2. The route proposed does not touch Wilderness Area land.
3. The "product" is Denali National Park. "They" did not create it. It belongs to the public and must be accessible, even to those who are disabled and in their later years or who have marginal budgets.

The sum of the objections is "I've got mine and I want no competition"

We urge you to pass HJR 28. It is essential to the expansion of tourism infrastructure in Alaska.

With best regards I am.

Sincerely yours.

Joseph N. Fields III, Dir.  
Kantishna Group Inc.

My name is Teri Camery. I am a resident of Fairbanks from Representative Davies district. I am testifying to voice my opposition against House Joint Resolution 28 and the construction of the Stampede Route through Denali National Park from Healy to Kantishna.

I know Denali Park very well from countless visits and backpacking trips over the past few years. I have also exhaustively researched controversies in this park, and did my thesis on the impact of RS2477 in Alaska.

I am opposed to a new road through the park for many reasons:

1) Economic

The Stampede Route is impassable during the summer months and passes over a glacial river bed. It also disappears in a number of places.

Under 1986 estimates the cost of the road would be \$85 million to \$125 million. Even if the federal funding pays for the construction of the road, doubtful at these huge prices, the state will still have to cover maintenance costs which may be tremendous, especially when building a road over a glacial riverbed and large acres of wetlands. Where will the state come up with this money?

The state made a one-time \$450,000 investment in a minimal upgrade of the Stampede Road beyond Eight-mile Lake in the early 1960s which quickly deteriorated and never resulted in any significant public travel.

In addition, as I understand it, the park's major concessioner (ARA), larger tour companies, and smaller inholder operations oppose ~~both~~ a northern access route. If they don't believe there is an economic benefit it is hard to believe that there is one for the state.

Residents of Healy and other neighboring communities are also generally opposed to the road.

2) The View

Mount McKinley viewing is superior on the south side of the Alaska Range. Wildlife and mountain views on the north side are significantly less dramatic compared to the existing route.

### 3) The Meaning and Purpose of Denali

Adding a new road will permanently change the character of the park and harm the priceless qualities people come there to see in the first place. A new road puts at risk the up-close viewing of animals that draws people to Denali.

Obviously the impacts of new road are not confined to the borders of the pavement. The impacts on wildlife and habitat are virtually undeniable. The Park Service has a mission to preserve Denali for future generations. The State has no right to interfere with that mission.

Regardless of RS2477 and private landholdings in Kantishna, the State does not have the right to damage land in the federal trust for its own financial gain. Under the current federal administration, the state would be foolish to tamper with Denali. A lawsuit would be imminent.

Finally, I have a copy of the Denali Access Task Force Report from the National Park Service which has much useful information. I would be happy to send copies to interested representatives.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Teri Camery  
1816 Musk Ox Trail  
Fairbanks, AK 99708



# ALASKA WILDLAND

ADVENTURES

March 19, 1998

THIS TESTIMONY IS IN OPPOSITION TO HJR NO. 28

Honorable Mike Miller  
Chairman Senate Resources Committee  
State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Senator Miller,

Alaska Wildland Adventures provides small-group natural history tours from the Kenai Peninsula to Denali National Park. Last summer we had over 70 individual departures and we serviced over 900 participants in our seven to twelve day trips. We are part of a growing trend in travel, now sometimes labeled "Ecotourism". We have several serious concerns with House Joint Resolution No. 28.

**DISPLACING EXISTING AND QUALITY BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE KANTISHNA REGION.** Over the last few years, the Kantishna area has emerged as a center of Small Group Natural History Tourism serving trip participants who want an active and educational vacation experience. Camp Denali, North Face Lodge, Kantishna Roadhouse, and Denali Backcountry Lodge (formerly Denali Mountain Lodge) are examples of established operations that collectively serve thousands of visitors in an environmentally responsible and highly educational and participatory manner each summer season. Economically, these businesses are important: for example, Alaska Wildland Adventures alone spends over \$350,000 in contracted services in this area each summer. In addition, these businesses have spent millions of dollars to construct facilities custom designed to provide the participatory and informative lodge experiences that their guests want and travel throughout the world to find. We believe that supporting increased access to this area as outlined in House Joint Resolution No. 28 would displace and negatively impact the businesses that are currently in the area.

**WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE KANTISHNA REGION IS THE ANSWER TO INCREASING ACCESS TO DENALI NATIONAL PARK.** By existing park road or by new access, the journey to Kantishna does not appear to be suitable to the general interest traveler nor the cruise/bus tour traveler. ARA, the concessionaire at Denali National Park, has

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noted a shift in use patterns from their six hour tour to their much shorter two hour tour of the park. There is no evidence that visitors in numbers of enough magnitude would travel the much longer route in order to justify the expense financially and environmentally. The proposed access route north of the park includes a lot of lowland, bog areas that would be uninteresting to potential visitors.

INCREASED ACCESS TO KANTISHNA THAT LEADS TO MORE EXTENSIVE USE OF THE PARK ROAD WOULD DESTROY THE WILDERNESS QUALITY AND WILDLIFE VIEWING THAT IS UNIQUE TO DENALI NATIONAL PARK. If in the end we destroy what it is that makes the area so coveted, what have we accomplished? Mass tourism access to the Kantishna area would certainly be a threat to the wilderness qualities that make Denali National Park such a desirable destination for visitors. In so doing, it would degrade the experience of all visitors and it would degrade the businesses that are currently operating successfully in the area.

Because of the above reasons, we hereby urge the Transportation Committee oppose House Joint Resolution No. 28.

Respectfully,



Kirk Hoessle  
President



## NORTH FACE LODGE

CAMP DENALI



P.O. Box 67, Denali National Park, Alaska 99755 • (907) 683-2290 • FAX (907) 683-2290  
Winter: P.O. Box 369, Cornish, N.H. 03746 • (603) 675-2248 • FAX (603) 675-9125

March 25, 1993

Honorable Richard Foster  
Chairman House Transportation Committee  
State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Representative Foster:

Denali National Park Wilderness Centers, Ltd. (dba *Camp Denali* and *North Face Lodge*) wishes to go on record in opposition of Alaska State House Joint Resolution No. 28, which supports increased access near Mount McKinley through establishment of a visitor activity area at Kantishna in Denali National Park.

In December of 1980, when this area was added to the existing Mount McKinley National Park, it was done for the purpose of more completely protecting the traditional wildlife habitat of the Park, particularly the Denali caribou herd. It was *not* set aside as a focal point for tourism development. In fact, the National Park Service is currently in the process of buying up patented mining claims which would be the only lands on which future tourist development could occur. In the view of Park managers and ourselves, this resolution is inconsistent with the natural values and the management goals for this region of Denali National Park.

Denali National Park Wilderness Centers, Ltd. owns and operates two of the four wilderness lodges in the Kantishna area. *Camp Denali* was established in 1951 as a true wilderness destination. *North Face Lodge* followed in 1973. Both deal with small numbers of people (capacities in the mid 30's, dedicated not to the number of people they can attract but to the aesthetics and to the capacity of the land which they use). A few Park visitors choose these places because of in-depth natural history and wilderness hiking opportunities. For the State of Alaska to promote further development of the Kantishna region would undermine the philosophy and market of our business and of the other two businesses in the area.

In addition, increased access to Kantishna will ultimately lead to more extensive use of the ninety-mile road into Denali National Park, whether or not there is a north boundary loop road or a railroad. Any increased development will further destroy the wilderness quality and wildlife viewing so unique to Denali National Park, those features that all Park visitors come to experience.

We trust the State of Alaska can understand that there is economic value in leaving some special areas for wilderness experiences, that not every uniquely beautiful place in the state should be developed to appeal to the masses. That is especially true when logistics do not make an economically sound case for development, as in the Kantishna scenario. The concessionaire at the Park entrance recently indicated that most Park visitors served by their tour bus system prefer a three-hour tour of the Park rather than the long-established six-hour tour. Indeed, over the years tour packages to Alaska have decreased from three weeks to less than two weeks in order to keep the price within the range of most travellers. Consequently, severe time constraints are put on the various destinations in those itineraries including Denali National Park. Over all, there simply is no evidence that a significant number of tourists to Alaska will dedicate the time or money to a destination so far off the beaten path as is the Kantishna area of Denali National Park.


If large scale development in the Kantishna area was economically feasible, we have the best private land and views for large-scale enterprise. But, in our thirty-five years of experience at both the Park entrance and in the Kantishna, we do not believe that the market demands it and we know that the costs of construction and operation in the Kantishna simply cannot justify it. As an aside, if large-scale development was justified, the "big players" in Alaska tourism would be killing each other for building opportunities in the Kantishna; they are not.

For years we have strongly advocated the development of the south side of the Alaska Range in Denali State Park as a major, multi-faceted tourist destination. Millions of dollars and hours of time have already been expended jointly by the National Park Service and the State of Alaska toward design concepts and site selections. We urge both parties to get on with the concept that germinated in the 70's, was refined in the mid-80's and has been on and off the "back burner" ever since. The area has easy, year-round access off the Parks Highway, is a mere 135 miles from where over half of the state's population resides and from where the majority of the out-of-state visitors disembark. Views of Mount McKinley and of the Alaska Range are unsurpassed; the climate is milder and there is more dependable snowfall for winter activities. It is worth noting that in all these years, no large-scale private enterprise has seized the

opportunity either on private or state land in this easily accessible area of stupendous scenery. If it hasn't happened yet on the south side of the Alaska Range (or at Hatcher Pass), how can large-scale development be justified in the remote Kantishna region, given its logistics? Wake up, State of Alaska!

Let the Kantishna region remain a wilderness destination for those few who want to make the effort to get there and who are seeking an in-depth experience in Denali National Park. Do not support development nor go to the expense of building miles of roads or railroads where there is no known economic justification, especially when there is state-owned and private land with views of Mount McKinley in a much more accessible location.

Respectfully,



Wallace A. Cole

Jerryne M. Cole

Owners, Denali National Park Wilderness Centers, Ltd.

cc: Vice-President Aibert Gore, Jr.

- Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of the Interior

Senator Ted Stevens

Senator Frank Murkowski

Senator Dale Bumpers

Representative Don Young

Governor Walter Hickel

Jack Moorhead, Regional Director Alaska Region National Park Service

Russell Berry, Superintendent Denali National Park



# Alaska Environmental Lobby, Inc.

P.O. Box 22151 Juneau, Alaska 99802

907-463-3366

## THE ALASKA ENVIRONMENTAL LOBBY OPPOSES HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 28

The Alaska Environmental Lobby opposes House Joint Resolution No. 28., a resolution calling for another transportation corridor and more development in Denali National Park's Kantishna area.

The Denali Access Task Force, in its November 1991 report, found that the level of business activity, new business starts, visitation and mining did not justify additional access. The same report concluded a "new road is not justifiable for park purposes, wildlife, economics or visitor services." The National Park Service has been buying private inholdings in Kantishna, and is opposed to new commercial construction in this fragile wilderness location. Cooperation of the Federal Government in further developing the Kantishna area is questionable. Another transportation corridor, especially a road with a large influx of visitors, will damage the unique remoteness that attracts tourists now.

During these times of severe state and federal budget cuts, the cost of a potential corridor cannot be justified economically. HJR 28 urges the Governor and executive branch to be aggressive in their resolve to enhance the Mt. McKinley experience by developing new environmentally sound access routes into Kantishna. Is there federal transportation money and the required 10% General Fund match available for such a project? If a road is built, is there General Fund money available for continued maintenance and operations? DOT/PF has cut its maintenance and operations budget over the past few years. Everyone is aware of our current crisis in properly maintaining existing roads. HJR 28 also suggests that the private sector could build a rail utility corridor into Kantishna. Road construction estimates were over \$80 million in 1992 and a rail corridor would be even more expensive. How can private industry do this without public money? These issues must be seriously considered prior to approving HJR 28.

The State should focus on improving existing tourist facilities in Denali State Park and other tourist destination sites throughout the State.

HJR 28 has the potential to be expensive and to seriously damage Denali National Park's Kantishna area as a tourist attraction. HJR 28 should be rejected.

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DENALI GR  
KACHEMAK BAY CONS  
KNIK GROUP, SIERRA CLUB • ROE  
PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND CONVA

LETTERS: OPPOSITION

EARTH  
S' COUNCIL  
KAYAKERS  
IRONMIENTAL CENTEM  
IVATION COUNCIL



*Department of Transportation  
and Public Facilities*

# POSITION PAPER

BILL NO: HJR 28

APPROVED: 

TITLE: Support Kantishna Area  
Tourism Development

DATE: March 3, 1993

DOT&PF supports improved access to the Kantishna Area. It would relieve the bottleneck that exists around the existing entrance to Denali National Park. That bottleneck has resulted in escalating land use, traffic, and tourism capacity problems. The fact that people travel to the state and are unsuccessful in adequately accessing Denali National Park, including Mt. McKinley, reflects poorly on the state's tourism industry rather than on the National Park Service.

Improved access to the Kantishna Area would allow expansion of the tourist industry by making quality Mt. McKinley viewing accessible to large numbers of people. Such use would be non-consumptive, would satisfy an existing demand (much of which is currently not satisfied), and would impact a small percentage of Denali National Park (much of which has previously been developed to support mining).

DOT&PF is proceeding with a location study for improved access to Kantishna. This resolution would offer substantial support to our effort. That would be valuable as we develop this project within Denali National Park. Rail is one of the alternative modes that will be considered. If, through the Federal-Aid location/environmental process, the NEPA process and the ANILCA Title XI process, it is identified as the preferred alternative, DOT&PF would advocate its development.

DOT&PF is opposed to selection of a preferred alternative until the location/environmental process has satisfactorily completed. Such a premature decision would jeopardize Federal-Aid funding (to the extent it would be applicable) and would jeopardize the process of securing necessary rights of way within Denali National Park.



# Alaska Environmental Lobby, Inc.

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Fax: 907-463-3372

## THE ALASKA ENVIRONMENTAL LOBBY OPPOSES HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 28

The Alaska Environmental Lobby opposes House Joint Resolution 28, a resolution calling for another transportation corridor and more development in Denali National Park's Kantishna area.

The Denali Access Task Force, in its November 1991 report, found that **the level of business activity, new business starts, visitation and mining did not justify additional access and that a "new road is not justifiable for park purposes, wildlife, economics or visitor services."** The National Park Service has been buying private inholdings in Kantishna, and is opposed to new commercial construction in this fragile wilderness location. Cooperation of the Federal Government in further developing the Kantishna area is questionable. Another transportation corridor, especially a road with a large influx of visitors, will damage the unique remoteness that attracts tourists now.

**During these times of severe state and federal budget cuts, the cost of a potential corridor cannot be justified economically.** Is there federal transportation money and the required 10% General Fund match available for such a project? If a road is built, is there General Fund money available for continued maintenance and operations? DOT/PF has cut its maintenance and operations budget over the past few years. Everyone is aware of our current crisis in properly maintaining existing roads. HJR 28 also suggests that the private sector could build a rail utility corridor into Kantishna. Road construction estimates were over \$80 million in 1992 and a rail corridor would be even more expensive. How can private industry do this without public money? These issues must be seriously considered prior to approving HJR 28.

The state should focus on improving existing tourist facilities in Denali State Park and other tourist destinations throughout the state.

**HJR 28 has the potential to be expensive and to seriously damage Denali National Park's Kantishna area as a tourist attraction. HJR 28 should be rejected.**

ALASKA ENVIRONMENTAL LOBBY, INC. • 22151 P.O. BOX • JUNEAU, ALASKA 99802 • 907-463-3366  
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## DENALI BOROUGH, ALASKA

RESOLUTION NO. 93-02A RESOLUTION ENDORSING THE CREATION OF A RAILROAD/UTILITY  
CORRIDOR FOR DENALI NATIONAL PARK ACCESS.

WHEREAS, Denali National Park is the top visitor destination in Alaska, and

WHEREAS, Denali National Park is a critical element in the Alaska Visitor Industry throughout the State, and

WHEREAS, the current limits on access into Denali National Park restrict many visitors and residents from entering the Park that would like to, and

WHEREAS, lack of access to Denali creates a bottleneck in the visitor/tourism delivery system of Alaska, and

WHEREAS, no additional access to the interior of the Park is included in the South Denali Concept Plan now under consideration, and

WHEREAS, the National Park Service "Denali Task Force Report" released in 1992 did not provide for any immediate increase in the capacity on the current north entrance road, and

WHEREAS, the National Park Service "Denali Task Force Report" described the rail access concept as captivating, and

WHEREAS, Kantishna Group Inc. has proposed an environmentally sound, sensible, innovative, and unique tourism railroad between Healy and Kantishna to provide access to the growing numbers of Alaskan visitors, and

AND WHEREAS, the Denali Borough and the communities within it, will benefit from permanent jobs and other economic activity created by the building and operation of the Kantishna Group Inc.'s railroad;

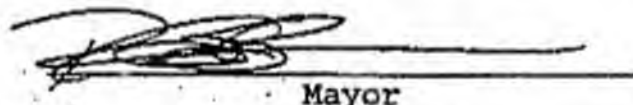
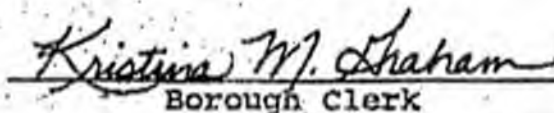
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: that the Denali Borough Assembly and Mayor strongly supports the Kantishna Group Inc.'s plans to construct and operate a general purpose tourism railroad into Denali National Park.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED: that the Denali Borough Assembly and Mayor encourages the National Park Service at Denali National Park, the Regional and National levels, the State of Alaska, its Governor, Legislature and National Delegation, to give full support to the creation of a Railroad Utility Corridor as proposed by the Kantishna Group Inc. as an appropriate, environmentally sound and sensible means of access to the Park to better serve the people of the United States and the World.

PASSED and APPROVED by the DENALI BOROUGH ASSEMBLY this 14th day of February, 1993.



ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Borough Clerk



# Representative Tom Brice

## ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

119 N. Cushman, Ste. 205  
Fairbanks, AK 99701  
907-456-7423  
While in Juneau  
State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182  
907-465-3466

### SPONSOR STATEMENT FOR HJR 28

Establishing rail access and a visitor area in Kantishna would help solve the problems of overcrowding and limited access that Denali National Park is now suffering. A rail corridor would provide for controlled public access, without the problems associated with road access, in an environmentally sound manner.

Rail access to Denali National Park adds visitor capacity and it creates a new way of experiencing the park. Private sector capital would be used for the construction and maintenance of a railroad using this access corridor. The jobs created would help to stabilize and diversify the Alaskan economy at a time when they will be needed to offset declining oil revenues.

Alaska's state government must take a philosophical turn. We must start encouraging and supporting the efforts of the private sector when they feel they can contribute to the economic well-being of the entire state. One such effort is outlined in HJR 28. This resolution is asking that the state be supportive of the private sector in its efforts to provide tourism opportunities to the visitors of Alaska. By looking into the possibility of establishing a rail utility corridor that could be leased from the state by the private sector as well establishing a visitor activity area in Kantishna, we can accomplish this.



3-26

## The Anchorage Times

Publisher: BILL J. ALLEN

"Believing in Alaska, putting Alaska first"

Editor: DENNIS FRADLEY, PAUL JENKINS, WILLIAM J. TUBIN

The Anchorage News Conservancy in this respect of the Anchorage Daily News (not returned) the views of the Daily News & its content are published under an agreement with former owners of The Times in the interest of preserving a diversity of viewpoints in the community.

### Kantishna resolve

**D**ENALI NATIONAL Park with its magnificent Mt. McKinley is by far the premier visitor attraction in Alaska.

People of all ages — tourist or resident — enjoy experiencing the wildlife and scenery of their park. The only problem is the park's manager, the National Park Service, doesn't enjoy letting people in. Each year, the Park Service seems to find yet another reason to further restrict visitors from traveling its barely maintained road or from doing any camping and hiking within the park boundaries.

It is because of this restrictive federal policy that a resolution now making its way through the Legislature is very important. The measure, House Joint Resolution 28, declares strong support for increased public access to the old mining region of Kantishna and for the development of visitor facilities in the area. Passing this resolution would declare the state's position to be opposite that of the Park Service.

Kantishna, at the end of the park's 88-mile long gravel road, was once an active gold mining region. It would still be one today had President Jimmy Carter not enclosed the gold mine region into an expanded national park — and the National Park Service subsequently denied miners the ability to work their claims.

IN RECENT YEARS, the federal government has attempted to buy out the old mines, offering private land owners a mere fraction of their land's worth. The Park Service makes no secret of its desire to get rid of all evidence of the old community and its history.

Kantishna is a few miles from Wonder Lake — the superb location for viewing the largest mountain in North America. Tremendous tourist potential exists for the area — someday, when it's economically feasible. However, that day will never come if the Park Service has its way.

The pending state resolution affirming support for development at Kantishna passed the House earlier this month and now awaits action in the Senate. It urges the governor and the Park Service to develop a new access route — a new road, railroad extension, or other mode of transportation — in order to provide the private sector an opportunity to meet the increased demand for tourism facilities in the region.

The measure's sponsor, Democrat Rep. Tom Brice of Fairbanks, says he hopes the resolution will serve as leverage for private investors to use in partnership with the state in developing environmentally sound tourist attractions at Kantishna.

He also hopes that the resolution, virtually identical to one authored by former Sen. Shirley Craft last session, will give the Park Service a clear message about Alaska's desire that Denali National Park be available for the enjoyment of the public — and not restricted just for the privileged few.

# FISCAL NOTE

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
**1993 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

BILL NO. HJR 28

Revision Date: Original  
 Title: Supporting increased access near Mt. McKinley

Dept. Affected: Natural Resources  
 BRU: Resource Development  
 Component: Land Development

Sponsor: Representative Brice  
 Requestor: House Transportation Committee

COMPONENT SERIAL NO. 431

**Expenditures/Revenues:**

(Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0

CAPITAL	0	0	0	0	0	0
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REVENUE FUND SOURCE:	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
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**FUNDING:**

(Thousands of Dollars)

1002 FEDERAL RECEIPTS						
1003 GF MATCH						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/PROG RECEIPTS						
1006 GF/MHTIA						
OTHER						
<b>TOTAL</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0

**POSITIONS:**

FULL-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
PART-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
TEMPORARY	0	0	0	0	0	0

Estimate of current year (FY 93) impact \$ None

**ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary.)**

There has long been an interest in providing a transportation route into the north side of Mt. McKinley. This resolution supports those efforts by having interested members of the public and private sectors work with appropriate state agencies and the National Park Service to accomplish that goal.

Prepared By: Ron Swanson  
 Division: Land

Phone: 762-2692  
 Date: March 4, 1993

Approved by Commissioner: Giann A. Olds  
 Agency: Natural Resources

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA  
1994 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. HJR 28

Revision Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: Supporting increased access near Mt. McKinley through  
establishment of a visitor activity area at Kantishna  
Sponsor: Representative Brice  
Requestor: \_\_\_\_\_

Department Affected: Commerce and Economic Development  
BRU: Tourism  
Component: Tourism Development  
COMPONENT SERIAL NO. 1017

Expenditures/Revenues:

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	F ' 98	FY 99	FY 00
PERSONAL SERVICES	0	0	0	0	0	0
TRAVEL	0	0	0	0	0	0
CONTRACTUAL	0	0	0	0	0	0
SUPPLIES	0	0	0	0	0	0
EQUIPMENT	0	0	0	0	0	0
LAND & STRUCTURES	0	0	0	0	0	0
GRANTS, CLAIMS	0	0	0	0	0	0
MISCELLANEOUS	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	0	0	0	0	0	0
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CHANGE IN REVENUES ( )	0	0	0	0	0	0
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FUND SOURCE

1002 Federal Receipts	0	0	0	0	0	0
1003 GF Match	0	0	0	0	0	0
1004 GF	0	0	0	0	0	0
1005 GF/Program Receipts	0	0	0	0	0	0
1006 GF/MHTIA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Estimate of current year (FY 94) cost: \$ 0

POSITIONS

FULL-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
PART-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
TEMPORARY	0	0	0	0	0	0

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary.)

This resolution does not impact operations of the Division of Tourism.

Prepared by: Mary B. Pignalberi, Director  
Division: Tourism

Phone: 465-2012  
Date: 1/19/94

Approved by Commissioner: Paul Fuhs  
Agency: Commerce and Economic Development

Date: 1/19/94

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STATE OF ALASKA  
1994 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

No. 3  
Bill Version: HJR 28  
(S) Publish Date: 1-20-94

Revision Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: Supporting increased access near Mt. McKinley through  
establishment of a visitor activity area at Kantishna  
Sponsor: Representative Brice  
Requestor: \_\_\_\_\_

Department Affected: Commerce and Economic Development  
BRU: Tourism  
Component: Tourism Development  
COMPONENT SERIAL NO. 1017

Expenditures/Revenues:

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 00
PERSONAL SERVICES	0	0	0	0	0	0
TRAVEL	0	0	0	0	0	0
CONTRACTUAL	0	0	0	0	0	0
SUPPLIES	0	0	0	0	0	0
EQUIPMENT	0	0	0	0	0	0
LAND & STRUCTURES	0	0	0	0	0	0
GRANTS, CLAIMS	0	0	0	0	0	0
MISCELLANEOUS	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	0	0	0	0	0	0
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CHANGE IN REVENUES ( )	0	0	0	0	0	0
------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---

FUND SOURCE

1002 Federal Receipts	0	0	0	0	0	0
1003 GF Match	0	0	0	0	0	0
1004 GF	0	0	0	0	0	0
1005 GF/Program Receipts	0	0	0	0	0	0
1006 GF/MHTIA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Estimate of current year (FY 94) cost: \$ 0

POSITIONS

FULL-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
PART-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
TEMPORARY	0	0	0	0	0	0

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary.)

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Prepared by: Mary B. Pignatelli, Director  
Division: Tourism

Phone: 465-2012  
Date: 1/19/94

Approved by Commissioner: Paul Fuhs  
Agency: Commerce and Economic Development

Date: 1/19/94

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