

STATE OF ALASKA

THE LEGISLATURE

1985

Source

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Requesting that the State of Alaska pursue a land exchange with the U.S. Department of the Interior to exclude the Dunkle Mine Township Area from Denali National Park and Preserve.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

WHEREAS the boundaries of Denali National Park and Preserve were expanded by the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in 1980 to include the historic Dunkle Mine Township Area; and

WHEREAS the Dunkle Mine Township Area contains good quality coal deposits, at least four high-grade gold/silver vein deposits, placer gold deposits, and large low grade copper/precious metal deposits; and

WHEREAS the proximity of the Dunkle Township Area to the Alaska Railroad and the Parks Highway enhances the favorability of the area's mining potential; and

WHEREAS claimholders had established rights to the minerals in the area before the time the park was expanded to include the claims; and

WHEREAS in recognition of the fact that the Dunkle Township Area has known mineral potential, Section 202(3)(b) of ANILCA mandated that a study of the relationship of mineral resources and mining activity to the other resources of the area be done by the Alaska Land Use Council in cooperation with the Secretary of Interior; and

WHEREAS the potential for mineral development of the Dunkle Township Area will be lost if the area stays within the park, as park status will not allow new mining claims and may invalidate many of the present claims; and

WHEREAS one of the alternatives offered in the 1983 Draft

Environmental Impact Statement of the Dunkle Mine Study was to remove mineralized areas and mining activity from the park boundaries and place them under the jurisdiction of the State of Alaska; and

WHEREAS there is no conclusive evidence that deletion of the Dunkle Township Area from the park would result in a lack of protection for the caribou herd, as any adverse effects that may occur from increased mining activity could be mitigated under the direction of the state; and

WHEREAS there is state owned land contiguous to Denali National Park and Preserve with scenic and wildlife values equal to the Dunkle Township Area; and

WHEREAS Section 1302(h) of ANILCA clearly authorizes exchanges in conservation units; and

WHEREAS public testimony solicited during the study process was in strong support of an exchange; and

WHEREAS the Department of Interior has indicated that it regards a land exchange as one of the better solutions for the problems identified in the Dunkle Mine Study, and initial discussions have occurred between the State Department of Natural Resources, the National Park Service, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks indicating a willingness by all parties to negotiate and exchange;

BE IT RESOLVED by the Alaska State Legislature that the State of Alaska and the Department of Interior take whatever action is necessary to exclude the Dunkle Township Area from the Denali National Park and Preserve through a land exchange that would allow the National Park Service to acquire lands of equal value with high scenic and wildlife habitat values and allow the state the opportunity to develop the mineralized lands in the Dunkle Township Area; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the land exchange be as simple and uncomplicated as possible, preferably for lands of equal value to the Dunkle Township Area and adjacent to the Denali National Park and Preserve.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Donald Hodel, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Interior; the Honorable Bill Sheffield, Governor; the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.