

New park legislation helps Anaktuvuk residents

Legislation resolving a long-standing land management issue at Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve in Alaska was approved by Congress as part of a large package of public land management measures.

"The legislation and companion agreement represent a cooperative solution to subsistence hunting and all-terrain vehicle use issues faced by residents of the village of Anaktuvuk Pass and federal land managers," said Gates of the Arctic National Park superintendent Dave Mills.

The village is located on the continental divide in the central Brooks Range, far from any navigable rivers, large lakes or the coast. The area does see large annual migrations of caribou, and these animals form the basis of an active subsistence lifeway for many residents. As technology developed and laws changed, the mostly Nunamiut residents of the village began to use all-terrain vehicles during the summer and fall to reach important hunting areas away from the community. Historically residents had relied on dogs for transportation in winter and for packing meat in summer. In the 1970s state hunting regulations prohibited the feeding of caribou meat to dogs, and their use by residents of Anaktuvuk Pass for subsistence activities became impractical. In the absence of waterways for subsistence activities, all-terrain vehicles came to replace dogs for hunting and fishing during snow-free months.

Over the years, local residents have

driven all-terrain vehicles across certain park and wilderness lands now within Gates of the Arctic National Park. In 1980, the Alaska National Interest Conservation Act established park lands encompassing village corporation lands and raised the issue of all-terrain vehicle access for sub-

long-standing dispute," said Mills.

Larry Burris, president of Nunamiut Corporation stated, "The agreement is the result of negotiation, compromise and cooperation on the part of the city government, the village and regional Native corporations, state government, conservation

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sistence use on park lands. In 1983 the Chandler Lake land exchange, between Arctic Slope Regional Corporation and the U.S. Government allowed for limited access but was reported to impose unworkable restrictions on the use of all-terrain vehicles in some areas and exacerbated the problem of access to established hunting, fishing and gathering areas.

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The agreement, originally executed in the fall of 1992, will begin to be implemented this year, now that the legislation has passed. The agreement allows continued use of all-terrain vehicles on designated park lands, reconfigures wilderness boundaries, secures conservation

easements and development restrictions on more than 100,000 acres of Native-owned lands, and provides public recreation access across nearly 150,000 acres of Native-owned land, among other provisions.

The general acreage and tracts involved in the exchange of interests specified in the legislation are as follows:

- 30,462 acres of federal park land are conveyed to the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation and the Nunamiut Corporation in exchange for 38,840 acres of corporation land to be conveyed to the United States.

- 73,993 acres within the park boundary would be deauthorized as wilderness.

- 56,825 acres not currently in wilderness status within the park would be designated as wilderness.

- 17,168 acres of Bureau of Land Management lands in the Nigu River drainage, now managed as a wilderness study area, would be designated wilderness and made part of the Noatak National Preserve.

- 116,435 acres of Native corporation land would have surface and subsurface development rights restricted.

- 148,484 acres of Native corporation land would be opened to non-motorized public recreational access to park land for hiking and camping

- 126,632 acres of non-wilderness park lands will be open to all-terrain vehicle access by Anaktuvuk Pass residents participating in subsistence activities.