

UPDATE

COVID-19

During the ongoing public health crisis, all in-person NPCA events have been canceled and we urge everyone to follow the guidance of public health experts in protecting themselves and their communities from the coronavirus. We know that many Alaska communities are dealing with concerns over the virus and impacts including how it will affect National Park Service staff and the tourism industry that drives so many Alaska park gateway economies. We are thinking of our friends and wishing everyone the best as we all wrestle with uncertainty over what is next.

Because we know that some threats to parks will persist even now, we will continue keeping you updated about how you can take action online to speak up for our national parks. In that spirit we share this field report with discussion of some of the issues facing Alaska national parks.

Top: Curtains of green aurora borealis fill the sky over high peaks of the Central Brooks Range in Gates of the Arctic National Park. ©Accent Alaska.com | Alamy **Right:** Brown bear pursuing salmon in Lake Clark National Park, Alaska ©Cathy Hart Photography

NPCA Works to Stop Pebble Mine

By Jim Adams

The proposed Pebble Mine in the Bristol Bay region endangers the world's largest sockeye salmon fishery, local communities, and the world-famous bears of Katmai and Lake Clark National Parks and Preserves. The Corps of Engineers has been tasked with permitting the mine and the accompanying 120-mile road and port. It has engaged in what is at best a cursory review of the project. For instance, the Corps' analysis of the impacts of the proposed port on bears is limited to impacts less than three miles from the port. Not coincidentally, the largest gathering of brown bears in the world is just over 3 miles

Sustainable communities, sustainable fisheries, healthy parks and thriving bears should not be sacrificed for a destructive, short-term mine.

from the proposed port and any potential impacts on them were ignored. We expect a decision on the proposed Pebble Mine permit from the Corps this summer. If they illegally ignore the data and choose to issue a permit that will harm national parks, bears, fish, and local communities, NPCA will consider legal action.



FIELD REPORT

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Alaska Corner by AK Regional Director Jim Adams

By Jim Adams

I hope you and your family are well. These are obviously unsettled times. Despite that, things at NPCA remain busy. Attacks on Alaska parks have not stopped during the Covid-19 crisis. Indeed, in some cases development proponents have used the emergency to cut the public out of decisions and aggressively move forward with projects that will harm national parks.

Despite the varied threats to park resources, there is some positive news on park funding. Senator Murkowski has been working to move a bill that will put \$6 billion toward dramatically reducing the National Park System's massive maintenance backlog while economically supporting local communities. It's a big deal to Alaska, where backlogged repair needs range from overhauling the Denali Park Road to rebuilding emergency shelter cabins in the Bering Land Bridge National Preserve.

In staffing news, Erica Carroll, our field representative, has moved to Fairbanks

Top: Regional Director Jim Adams. Photo courtesy of Jim Adams. **Above (Left):** Wally Long, Regional Development Director. Photo courtesy Wally Long. **Above (Right):** Joshua Jenkins, Senior Program Coordinator. Photo courtesy of Joshua Jenkins.



where she will give NPCA a stronger interior Alaska voice. We are also welcoming two new people to our team. **Joshua Jenkins** joined NPCA as senior program coordinator in Seattle. He'll lend our Alaska office a hand with some of our operational and programmatic needs. **Wally Long** became NPCA's new regional development director for the Alaska, Northern Rockies and Northwest regions. He comes to us most recently from The Northwest School in Seattle where he served as director of alumni and development.

As always, thanks for your work to protect parks.



Advocate Spotlight

By Alex Johnson

Rick Delkittie, Sr., and his family rely on salmon and healthy waters for their way of life, just as their ancestors in the Lake Clark region have for generations. For the past two decades, Rick has spoken out against the proposed Pebble Mine and the likely impacts to his family, community and culture. Rick has traveled to Washington, D.C., to lobby on four separate occasions, most recently with NPCA staff for the Centennial Lobby Day, during which he spoke to Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski about his concerns.

"I now see that national parks can be used as tools to protect our home," says Rick. "Some places just aren't meant to have a mine, and this is one of those places."



Above: Rick Delkittie at Fish Camp Summer 2019. Photo courtesy of Rick Delkittie.

State and Federal Agencies Rush Toward a New Mining District in the Heart of Wild Northwest Alaska

By Alex Johnson

For nearly a decade, NPCA has been monitoring the proposal for the Ambler Mining Industrial Access Road in northwest Alaska. The “Ambler Road” would consist of a 210-mile route through Gates of the Arctic National Preserve across the tundra of the southern Brooks Range. The road’s proposed purpose is to access a currently unproven mining district where no permitted mines yet exist.

Thanks to the Trump and Dunleavy administrations, what was once just another “road to nowhere” is looking more like a 21st-century version of the Hickel Highway, the infamous and now-abandoned pioneer road built in just 100 days through what is now Gates of the Arctic National Park.

NPCA’s concerns related to the Ambler Road are numerous. For starters, it would disrupt one of the last great land migrations in the world, that of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd. The National Park Service (NPS) manages over 20 million acres of the herd’s range, including lands within Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, Kobuk Valley National Park, Bering Land Bridge and Noatak National Preserves, and Cape Krusenstern National Monument. Most of these lands are managed in a contiguous, ecologically intact landscape that encompasses most of the western Brooks Range. This road and the associated Ambler Mining District would threaten the integrity of that landscape, imperiling the migration of the herd and the food security of the communities that rely on the caribou for their subsistence lifestyle.

Building the road and mining district would also imperil nearly two thousand waterways including the federally designated Wild Kobuk River. World-class fisheries and regional water quality could be impacted by erosion, changes to unique water flow across the tundra landscape, and contami-

to conduct environmental review and allow for public input. The Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Army Corps and NPS released their draft environmental analysis documents for public review this past fall. However, the public comment period coincided with the height of the fall hunting and harvest season, making it very difficult for those in affected communities to participate.

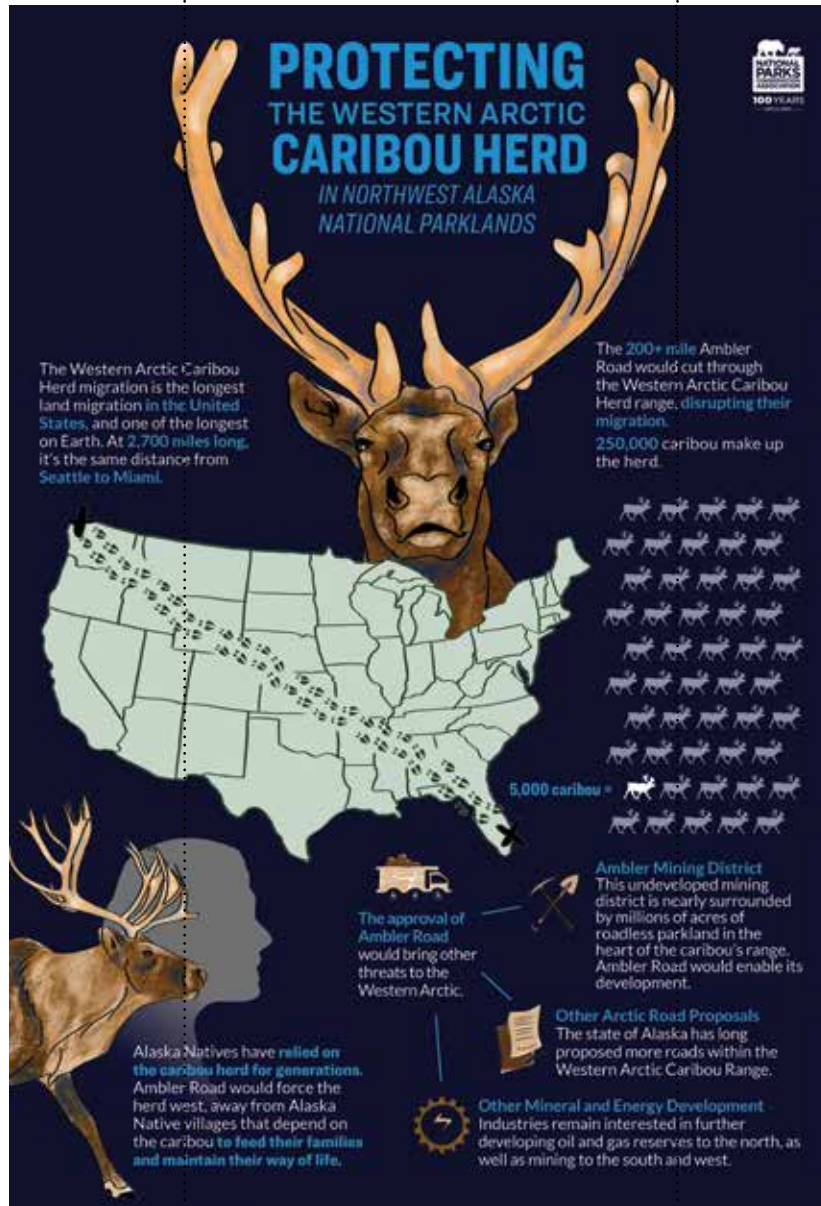
Due to the inadequate public and tribal consultation process, along with other failures of the environmental analysis itself, NPCA has requested that the environmental review process be halted and a revised Environmental Impact Statement be completed. Unfortunately, the final review was released this spring, paving the way for the next steps in permitting for the road and the proposed Arctic Mine, the first mine within the Ambler Mining District.

NPCA will continue working with local community members, tribes and business owners to slow the permitting process for the Ambler Road and Arctic Mine to properly take into account impacts to the Western Arctic Caribou Herd, important fisheries and all of the subsistence resources that are essential for the way of life of people in Northwest Alaska.

We will continue to provide updates as the Ambler Road and Arctic Mine review processes move forward, with the possibility for additional public comment

on the Arctic Mine later this summer. For more information, visit www.npca.org or call Alaska Program Manager, Alex Johnson, at 907.891.2272.

WACHAK Infographic ©NPCA



nation from industrial activities along the road corridor and large open-pit mines.

Whenever proposals like these arise, the federal agencies responsible for the management of the impacted resources are required



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Denali Park Road

By Jim Adams

The Denali Park Road, within Denali National Park and Preserve, is one of the great park experiences this nation has to offer. A 90-mile gravel road through park wilderness, it provides breathtaking views and a chance to see bears, wolves, caribou and moose. Unfortunately, climate change is taking its toll on the road. Due to melting permafrost and ice, a portion of the road between miles 43 and 48 that hugs the face of Polychrome Pass is likely to become impassable at some point in the near future without significant modifications and a possible re-route. Though a long-term solution may be expensive, it is worth it. The Denali Park Road provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for park visitors to experience true wilderness and NPCA is working to find a solution that will ensure future generations retain the opportunity to experience this vast landscape.

A 90-mile gravel road through park wilderness, [Denali Park Road] provides breathtaking views and a chance to see bears, wolves, caribou and moose.



Top Left and Right: Views of slide area along Denali Park Road Fall 2019 ©Anthony Burton
Bottom: Scene along Denali Park Road in Denali National Park, Alaska ©Ian Shive

