



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The Nabesna Road Motorized Trail EIS Newsletter is a publication to support and encourage public participation in the NEPA process.

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## Scoping meeting results - Where do we go from here?

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Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve planning staff has developed a draft set of management alternatives. These alternatives present a wide range of actions for management of recreational ORV use on the nine subject trails off the Nabesna road. This draft set of alternatives is being reviewed by the NPS and should be available for public review and comment by mid-October, 2008. Your comments will then be used to finalize a set of alternatives that will be analyzed in the EIS. We are still hoping to get a Draft EIS out for public review by the fall of 2009 (one year from now).

So, keep an eye out for the draft alternatives. If you are on the mailing list, they will be mailed to you. They will also be posted on the park's website (same website as listed above) and they will be posted on the NPS Planning, Environmental, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/WRST>.



# ORV Planning Newsletter

## Scoping Meeting Results are in for the Nabesna Environmental Impact Statement

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST) is in the process of developing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) considering the effects of recreational use of off-road vehicles

**The purpose of this second newsletter is to update interested parties regarding the planning process.**

(ORVs) along nine trails in the Nabesna area. The EIS is being written as one of the conditions of a settlement agreement resulting from a 2006 lawsuit filed against the National Park Service. The purpose of this second newsletter is to update interested parties regarding the planning process. The first newsletter, put out in spring of 2008, can still be found on the park's website at [www.nps.gov/wrst/parkmgmt/planning.htm](http://www.nps.gov/wrst/parkmgmt/planning.htm).

### Public scoping results

In late March and early April of 2008, WRST held five public meetings in Glennallen, Tok, Slana, Fairbanks and Anchorage. The purpose of the meetings was to present information to the public about the project and to solicit



The summer field season found NPS staff conducting surveys of vegetation, archeological sites, stream crossings, and wetlands. Read more about these planning activities on page 2.

public comment. At each meeting there were displays on issues, the planning process, alternative management "themes", legal authorities for ORV use, and background information. The public had time to look at the displays and ask questions to National Park Service (NPS) staff. Comment forms were available to be taken at the meetings or could be mailed in at a later date. The meetings were attended by over 90 people and we received numerous comments. A description of the public scoping process and a summary of all comments is contained in a scoping report, also

available for review at the park's website at [www.nps.gov/wrst/parkmgmt/planning.htm](http://www.nps.gov/wrst/parkmgmt/planning.htm). Or you can request a copy of the scoping report by calling Bruce Rogers

**A description of the public scoping process and a summary of all comments is contained in a scoping report available online or by request.**

at 907-822-7276. The comments received will be used to shape and refine the management alternatives that will be analyzed in the EIS.

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# Summer Field Season - Planning Projects

Much of the summer was spent gathering information so that a thorough analysis can be presented in the EIS. Despite the challenging and wet conditions this summer, the following activities occurred in the field:

## Cultural resource surveys

This work, started in 2007, will be completed this fall. The surveys are being conducted by Northern Land Research, Inc. from Fairbanks. The surveys are conducted within a trail corridor for existing trails as well as potential re-routes. Field crews walk or ride the trails, locate high-probability landforms, and test sites by digging pits. Their findings will be summarized in a report to be provided to WRST.

## Vegetation/wetlands mapping

Vegetation mapping was actually conducted for the trail corridors as part of a mid-90's NPS study on the impacts of ORVs in WRST. This winter and spring, St. Mary's University of Minnesota mapped wetlands along the trails corridors, based on the mid-90's vegetation mapping and on satellite imagery interpretation. Field verification of the mapping occurred along the trail corridors this summer.

## Fish habitat characterization

There are numerous stream crossings on the nine subject trails. WRST entered into a cooperative agreement with Alaska Department of Fish and Game to characterize fish habitat at these crossings. The work is being done by the Habitat Division out of Fairbanks. Each crossing is visited, the habitat

condition is noted, and presence or potential presence of fish is documented. The field work was preceded by a thorough review of existing fisheries inventories in the area. The work will result in a report that summarizes habitat conditions at each crossing and makes management recommendations.

## Trail use information

Trail counters were placed on each of the trails. These, along with ORV permit information and information gathered from trail users last winter, will enable us to accurately describe the level of use for the trails. In general, use on the trails was down this summer/fall because of the wet conditions in the area. A couple of the trails (Reeve Field and Copper Lake) were physically closed for periods of time this season due to high water levels or flooding.

## Examination of potential re-routes

At least one management alternative will examine the possibility of re-routing certain trails to locations where soils and topography would allow for construction and maintenance of a more sustainable trail. Part of the field season was spent checking out potential re-routes and examining soils, topography, drainage, presence or absence of permafrost, and soil substrate. This information will be used to assess the feasibility of re-routes within a range of management alternatives.



National Park Service personnel measuring trail trend to quantify impacts.

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## Planning Projects

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## Sound data

A sound monitoring station was set up for most of the summer adjacent to the Caribou Creek trail. The purpose is to collect data on ambient sound levels and frequency of non-natural sounds.

## Trail trend monitoring

Trail measurements taken in the mid-80's were re-taken this year for the Suslota, Tanada, and portions of the Copper Lake trails. Measurements included trail width, number of braids, trail depth, and cover. This data will be used to display how the trail footprints are changing over time.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

The history of off-road vehicle (ORV) use in the Nabesna District predates the establishment of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. It commenced after the World War II era when surplus military vehicles were used by hunters, miners, and others for personal use and access to remote areas. Several of the trails in question started out as winter trails, used under frozen conditions and never intended for summertime use.

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# Future Public Participation Opportunities

**Mid October 2008 - Draft Management Alternatives available for review and public comment.**

This is where we are now. Based on the feedback we received during public scoping, a management proposal is being developed that addresses the purpose and need and the issues that have been identified. Then, alternative management actions will be developed that allow us to consider and display a varying degree of environmental effects. This information will then be presented to the public in the form of draft management alternatives.

**Fall 2009 - Draft EIS available for review and public comment.**

The management alternatives will be analyzed and environmental effects from each alternative displayed in a Draft EIS. There will be public meetings and a comment period of 60 days once the Draft EIS is printed and distributed. This is tentatively scheduled for the fall of 2009.

**December 1010 - Final EIS and Record of Decision**

Based on comments received, changes will be made to the Draft EIS and a Final EIS and Record of Decision will be printed. This is tentatively scheduled for the fall of 2010.



It was a wet season in Nabesna which made field work difficult.

## Public Scoping Meetings - The Numbers

### Number in Attendance at Meetings

**Tok - 22**

**Slana - 28**

**Glennallen - 9**

**Anchorage - 26**

**Fairbanks - 2**

### Number of Comments Received

**Individuals - 21**

**Government Agencies - 3**

**Organizations - 3**



Summer field work.