



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Gates of the Arctic  
National Park and  
Preserve

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## Ambler Mining District Right of Way

Information prepared for Regional Advisory Council Meetings, 2013

The National Park Service is gathering information about the south western portion of Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. The information will assist the park in considering any application for a transportation corridor right-of-way across park lands.

Before the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) established Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve in 1980, major mining companies had identified the likelihood of rich mineral deposits in the Ambler Mining District. Congress, in considering the establishment of Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, recognized that a transportation corridor to the Ambler Mining District might become desirable, and might connect with the Dalton Highway. The upper Kobuk River area was included in Gates of the Arctic National Park, but Congress made allowances for a transportation corridor across that portion of the new park in order to provide access for future development of mineral resources.



*ANILCA, Section 201(4)(b) states,  
“Congress finds that there is a need  
for access for surface transportation  
purposes across the Western (Kobuk  
River) unit of the Gates of the Arctic  
National Preserve (from the Ambler  
Mining District to the Alaska Pipeline  
Haul Road) and the Secretary shall  
permit such access in accordance with  
the provisions of this subsection.”*

Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve is instructed by ANILCA to prepare for the Secretary of Interior an

“...environmental and economic analysis ...for... determining the most desirable route for the right-of-way and terms and conditions which may be required for issuance of that right-of-way.”  
(ANILCA §201 (4)(d))

The National Park Service is now in the process of gathering data which will help it evaluate impacts on park resources of alternative transportation corridors through the Kobuk River unit. In order to recommend “the most desirable route” the park needs to understand possible impacts of a road on subsistence resources. Alatna, Allakaket, Ambler, Anaktuvuk Pass, Bettles,

Evansville, Hughes, Kobuk, Nuiqsut, Shungnak, and Wiseman are subsistence resident zone communities for Gates of the Arctic National Park. The National Park Service is particularly interested in learning from those communities about resources with which they are familiar, and resources they use in the Kobuk River area of Gates of the Arctic National Preserve. The NPS would like to hear ideas about the impacts a road may have on subsistence resources. Such community information will be useful as the park considers its recommendations for the most desirable route across the Preserve.



 Area of special interest

## Questions and Answers

### How is the National Park Service involved in the Ambler Mining Access planning process?

- When an application for a right-of-way across Gates of the Arctic National Preserve is filed, the Secretary of the Interior is directed by ANILCA to prepare an environmental and economic analysis solely to determine the most desirable route through the Preserve and the terms and conditions that may be required. The Secretaries of Interior and Transportation jointly are to agree upon a route, and the right-of-way is to be issued in accordance with ANILCA.

### What has happened so far?

- In November 2010, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) notified the National Park Service (NPS) of its intention to submit an application for access across the Kobuk River area of Gates of the Arctic National Preserve.
- ADOT&PF researched road and rail options connecting the Ambler Mining District with other existing transportation infrastructure and with potential port sites.
- Interest and research is being placed by ADOT&PF on a route from the Dalton Highway near Prospect Creek through the Kobuk River area of Gates of the Arctic National Preserve. Two possible corridors through the preserve have been identified. Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve is gathering input and doing research on environmental resources in the Kobuk River area of the preserve.
- The National Park Service will recommend to the Secretary of Interior a preferred surface transportation corridor in response to an application for a right-of-way.

## **What is the latest update on NPS activity on the Ambler Mining District Right of Way?**

- The NPS has three current research projects in the Kobuk River area which will provide information on archaeology, bears and wolves, and natural soundscapes. Additional research on water resources and fisheries resources are planned for next year.
- The NPS is planning community visits to talk about important traditional cultural resources in the Kobuk River area. Research data will help inform park managers about impacts of a road corridor through the preserve.
- The NPS has permitted some State sponsored research activities this year in the Park and Preserve related to resources which may impact or be impacted by a road. The research projects are centered in the southern portion of Gates, and include a snow survey, fisheries surveys, wetlands and wetland vegetation survey, hydrologic and hydraulic surveys of the Kobuk and the Reed Rivers, and cultural resource reconnaissance surveys.
- The NPS is working with the Federal Highway Administration to identify additional information needed for a decision on preferred road corridors through the preserve. The Federal Highway Administration is the agent for the Secretary of Transportation in evaluating a corridor through the Kobuk River area. They provide extensive technical expertise on road design.

## **How can I stay informed?**

- Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve will maintain an email mailing list and send regular newsletters with information about National Park involvement in the Ambler Mining District Right of Way. The park is developing a website which will have current information and they will send the link to all persons on the email list. The newsletter and website will provide additional contact information. If you are interested in receiving the newsletter, please provide your email address on the sign-up sheet.

## **How can I have input?**

- The NPS is interested in information about resources which will be impacted by any transportation corridor developed within Kobuk River area of Gates of the Arctic National Preserve.

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## **What information is the NPS seeking?**

Things the NPS would like to hear from rural residents:

- How would a road through the Kobuk River area of Gates of the Arctic National Preserve impact you?
- Do you go to the Kobuk River area of Gates often? Where do you go and what do you do there?
- What do you think impacts of a road would be on natural resources of that area?
- Potential impacts to water, fisheries, or cultural resources are three areas of concern which have been identified by the NPS. What are other big concerns?
- Are there important traditional places in that area of the park which might be impacted by a road?

### **Who is involved in Ambler Mining District Access project?**

- Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) – a public corporation within the State of Alaska. Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities has given project evaluation, planning, management and oversight to the AIDEA
- DOWL Engineers - contracted by AIDEA for project management and execution of studies needed for route identification and selection
- National Park Service (NPS), Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve , Department of Interior – mandated by ANILCA to permit access across the Kobuk River unit of Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve for surface transportation purposes from the Ambler Mining District to the Alaska Pipeline Haul Road. The National Park Service is the agent for the Secretary of Interior in evaluating the most desirable route for the right-of-way and terms and conditions which may be required in the right-of-way
- Federal Highway Administration – agents for Secretary of Transportation in evaluating a transportation corridor right-of-way permit application through Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, and for determining the most desirable terms and conditions for a right of way
- NANA, DOYON, State of Alaska, Bureau of Land Management--primary landowners along a potential transportation corridor outside the Gates of the Arctic National Preserve