

Visitor Interpretive Experience Plan



Tok Main Street Visitor Center

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For The

Tok Main Street Visitor Center

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Definitions and Acronyms

The following terms and acronyms are used in this document.

Definitions

Understanding the following terms will be useful in understanding this document:

- Visitor Interpretive Experience Plan
- Interpretive Program or Network
- Message (theme)
- Visitors
- Priority Audiences
- Nature
- Appropriate Use of Public Lands

Visitor Interpretive Experience Plan

Up until very recently, an 'Interpretive Plan' was the document that was typically produced to guide development of an Interpretive Program, which includes all the exhibits, interpretive panels, publications and similar interpretive opportunities for a site or facility. While such plans can identify opportunities that communicate desired themes to target audiences, they often fail because they do not take into consideration the experiential context in which they must function.

The best interpretive planning models reflect the need to take target audience, goals and objectives, constraints, opportunities, and themes into account when selecting information delivery strategies and content. However, they still treat the array of strategies – the Interpretive Program as a whole – as the focal point of the plan. Although any interpretive planning effort should result in identifying the array of interpretive opportunities to develop, the approach should be to first identify the ideal *visitor experiences* (ones that by their nature would benefit from effective interpretive opportunities) from the perspective of those developing the Interpretive Program, and then use those experiences to determine what interpretive and other information to offer. Such experiences also must be ones that target audience are willing to buy with their time, which requires knowing your target audiences beyond basic demographic information.

Using a visitor experience approach ensures that you develop a plan, labeled a 'Visitor Interpretive Experience Plan,' for a complete information network that begins with reaching your target audiences where they are – physically, emotionally and intellectually – and taking them where you want them to go by using a linked combination of trip planning information, orientation, wayfinding and interpretive opportunities. It also ensures that you identify barriers to the desired experiences, such as facilities that are not fully accessible, so you can address those barriers within the context of developing your Interpretive Program, thus increasing the probability the visitors can access and engage with the information.

In sum, people today buy *experiences*. Consequently, the desired product to guide development of an Interpretive Program is a Visitor Interpretive *Experience* Plan (VIEP), which uses desired audience experiences as the frameworks for determining the interpretive, outreach, orientation, wayfinding, and trip

planning information to develop and actions to take to facilitate experiences that will attract, hold and communicate effectively with target audiences, whether on or off-site.

Interpretive Program or Network

This refers to all the interpretive opportunities offered by Tok Main Street Visitor Center (TMSVC) or in Extended Opportunities, as opposed to just an evening ‘program.’

Message (Theme)

The interpretive profession adopted the term ‘theme’ to indicate the set of ‘points,’ or ‘messages’ to be communicated in interpretive opportunities. The issue is that most people use ‘theme’ and ‘topic’ synonymously. Consequently, many people reading Interpretive Plans of any type do not understand what is meant when the term ‘theme’ is used. Therefore, we use the term ‘message’ instead of the term ‘theme’ as an attempt to provide clarity.

Visitors

The goal of a network of interpretive opportunities is to forge an emotional/intellectual connection between a member of a target audience and the primary topic(s) included in that network, which in the case of the TMSVC are Public Lands. Although a visit to Public Lands might be the most effective vehicle for creating such connections, it is not the only one. In other words, people do not have to physically step foot in the TMSVC or on Public Lands to be termed a visitor. The term ‘visitor’ in this document is applied to anyone engaging with an interpretive opportunity that is a part of the network of interpretive opportunities being developed, such as the website. In other words, it includes ‘virtual visitors.’

Priority Audiences

Priority Audiences are those who need to be reached to accomplish the Primary Goals for an institution or entity. In this case, key target audiences include visitors entering Alaska from Canada on the Alaska Highway (Highway 2) and visitors from other parts of Alaska. The location is also advantageous for travelers going East to Canada from Alaska. This does not mean residents are not an important audience. However, using outreach and other opportunities to reach them may be more effective than using interpretive opportunities.

Nature

Everyone has a connection with nature since they breathe air, drink water and eat food, all of which are linked to our natural world. Most people already have a relationship and value nature in some way, but the nature they value may not be native flora and fauna. The USFWS in particular, and other public land management agencies in general want people to restore, protect and conserve *native* flora and fauna in their natural habitats. The term ‘nature’ in this document refers to native flora and fauna unless otherwise defined.

Appropriate Use of Public Lands

These activities are based in part on the regulations involving use of those lands by the public and vary by agency. For example, mining is allowed on lands managed by the USDA Forest Service and DOI Bureau of Land Management, but not generally on lands administered by the USFWS or NPS (there are exceptions, for example, land on the Arctic NWR affected by the 2018 Tax Law that includes Oil and Gas purposes of the Refuge). Appropriate use is also often based on sustainability. For example, recreational use on Refuges is sustainable if that use does not exceed carrying capacity. For example, hunting and fishing are appropriate activities on the refuge, but they must be regulated to maintain sustainability of fish and wildlife populations.

Stepping Stones of Engagement

Stepping Stones of Engagement encompass an *array* of opportunities that constitute potential starting points to expose target audiences to nature and wildlife, and in the case of the USFWS, National Wildlife Refuges, the managing agency and conservation. By necessity, ‘starting Stepping Stones’ are in places – physical or digital – at which the target audience is already present, which are unlikely to be on Public Lands. Ideally, the first Stepping Stones should be ones that are already a comfortable part of everyday life for target audiences. Most people have some existing relationship with nature, such as having house plants, or a backyard garden. Those existing relationships should be the starting place for Stepping Stones of Engagement, which requires that *their* nature be considered valid. The discussion will not proceed far if it begins with an intimation that only the nature that public land management agencies want to conserve constitutes *real* nature and what the target audiences value is not ‘*real*’ and *not of value*. The approach of starting where the audience is currently located reflects the commitment by the USFWS to meet people where they are, while also reflecting a key principle in this process, which is to minimize the effort required and barriers that must be surmounted for a person to begin engaging with nature and/or conservation. Each Stepping Stone provides an experience with nature in some way. As a whole, ‘starting Stepping Stones’ offer potential visitors an array of opportunities to experience nature, so everyone has an opportunity to interact with and experience nature in a way that they consider ‘safe’ and within his or her comfort zone. For some it may be a visit to Public Lands, but for others it may be a virtual experience on the Internet or some other option that does not involve visiting Public Lands but is necessary for making them feel safer and more comfortable with an actual visit.

Each Stepping Stone not only provides an opportunity to experience nature at a specific level, but also seeks to move a visitor along the journey to becoming fully engaged in conserving natural resources. Consequently, all ‘starting Stepping Stones’ are linked to a myriad of potential ‘follow-up stepping stones,’ and from those to other Stepping Stones of Engagement in what is hoped to be an endless journey of engagement and associated commitment to conservation that takes the form of actions.

The keys to an effective array of Stepping Stones of Engagement include the following:

1. Validate whatever relationship the target audience currently has with nature that they consider a part of their quality of life. This could range from a completely natural environment to house plants, a backyard garden, a bird feeder, a neighborhood park, and other examples of nature that are managed in some way.
2. Provide easily accessible ‘next Stepping Stones’ in locations already frequented by the target audiences, which in this case are within their community, with the goal of deepening their connection to nature.

3. Ensure that each Stepping Stone offers high benefit to the target audience for the cost of time, attention and other personal resources as defined by the target market. This is especially important for the starting Stepping Stones.
4. Ensure that the 'distance' between Stepping Stones is such that a person can take 'baby steps' of commitment to conservation.
5. Ensure that each Stepping Stone markets potential next stepping stones.
6. Ensure that the Refuge is a focal point within the array of Stepping Stones.

Acronyms

The following acronyms are used in this document:

TMSVC: Tok Main Street Visitor Center

FWS or USFWS: US Fish & Wildlife Service

NWRS: National Wildlife Refuge System

USFS: USDA Forest Service

NPS: National Park Service

TCOC: Tok Chamber of Commerce

BLM: Bureau of Land Management

CSU: Conservation System Unit

ALCAN: Alaska/Canada Highway or Alaska Highway

Executive Summary

The Visitor Interpretive Experience Plan for Tok Main Street Visitor Center (TMSVC) identifies the information network – including interpretive opportunities – to develop, infrastructure to modify and other actions to be taken to upgrade visitor interpretive experiences at the TMSVC that motivate visitors to stay longer in the area, highlight the importance of Public Lands and help make progress towards the overall Management Goals. The following is a brief overview of the goals, messages, priority audiences, key factors, and primary recommendations in this plan.

Goals

The direction for the plan – the Interpretive Program Goals – were established from the Mission and Management Goals for the Visitor Center. Those parts of the Goal Hierarchy are as follows:

Mission

The mission of the Tok Main Street Visitor Center is to promote appropriate use of and support for Public Lands in Eastern Interior Alaska by visitors to the area, with the intent of an increased level of stewardship by visitors and an extended length of stay in the area.

This addresses both a major goal of Public Land Management agencies, which is appropriate use of the resources they administer, and a major goal of the Tok Chamber of Commerce, which is increased use of Public Lands in this part of Alaska, which should directly translate into visitors staying longer in the area, leading to an increased revenue stream.

Management Goals

1. Increase use of the TMSVC by travelers on the ALCAN.
2. Increase awareness by travelers of the wide array of recreational opportunities on surrounding Public Lands, motivate them to spend time on Public Lands in the area, and facilitate visitors taking advantage of those opportunities.
3. Increase awareness of the value of Public Lands in Alaska, the need to conserve those Public Lands, and support for the management agencies.
4. Decrease issues between visitors and residents, including with the Athabascan communities in the area.

Interpretive Program Goals and Objectives

- **Interpretive Program Goal 1:** Increase appropriate recreational use of and expand seasonality of use on nearby Public Lands by visitors.
- **Interpretive Program Goal 2:** Increased level of stewardship on the part of visitors (*become better stewards of natural and cultural resources*), including recreating responsibly.
- **Interpretive Program Goal 3:** Increased support for entities who manage public lands (this includes increased support for management decisions).
- **Interpretive Program Goal 4:** All visitors feel welcome to Public Lands and safe when exploring the recreational opportunities on those lands and in nature in general.

- **Interpretive Program Goal 5:** Increased understanding of, interest in, and respect for the traditional lifestyle of rural Alaskans – both Native and non-native.

Priority Audiences

Priority audiences are ones that potentially have the greatest impact on achieving Management Goals. Based on Goal Hierarchy established for this project, review of existing information, and discussions with FWS personnel and stakeholders, the priority audiences include the following:

- Travelers coming to and through Tok and the surrounding area.
- Activity-oriented visitors (residents and non-residents). This includes birdwatchers, hunters, anglers, and others for who their chosen activity is the highest priority for spending their time. Although they may view interpretive opportunities as lower priority, and therefore may not be as willing to engage, they still need trip planning, orientation, and wayfinding information to have the experience they desire. Most activity-oriented visitors also have time during day when they cannot engage in their priority experience and would therefore be more amenable to interpretive opportunities.

Within each of those groups are the more typical audience segments – families, elderly, those with physical limitations, groups of friends (of any age), etc.

Key Factors

The following are the most significant factors (parameters) that affected recommendations in this plan:

- The FWS has committed a staff person for the facility.
- The site has parking for RVs, although the parking area could be re-designed for easier use by people with longer vehicles.
- Amenities outside the facility that are not secured, such as picnic tables and porta-potties, are not an option because they attract use by elements of the population that detract from a good visitor experience and cause an increase in maintenance.
- The site has a significant amount of exterior space that is not paved, creating the opportunity to expand parking, plant a garden of some type, add sculptures, etc.
- The parking area has a large standpipe that has already been run into by vehicles a number of times. (This led to the recommendation to drill a new well elsewhere, remove the standpipe, and cap the existing well.)
- The building is owned by the Chamber of Commerce and sub-let by the FWS. Chamber of Commerce activities will be a key part of the building function.
- The Chamber needs enough room to discharge their functions and for their members to take advantage of opportunities afforded by their membership in the Chamber.
- The building will contain both an area for dispensing orientation, wayfinding and trip planning information and an area for interpretive opportunities.
- The east wing of the Visitor Center is currently dedicated to the public library.
- The structure has a separate room on the north side, creating a good opportunity to dedicate that space for showing videos, conducting personal programs and holding meetings without interfering with other functions of the facility.

- The main space in the Visitor Center must be accessible for functions, such as the school prom. All exhibits located in the interior space (not against the wall) must be easy to move.
- Nothing large or that can damage the walls can be attached to the log walls.
- High tech opportunities should be avoided due to the difficulty in repairing such devices.
- A way to display current information on the new mine on the Taylor Highway must be included within the Interpretive/Information Network.

Messaging

Introduction

To avoid the information-driven or ‘encyclopedic’ approach to the interpretive opportunities, which has been determined to be ineffective, this plan uses a message-driven approach. Messages can be thought of the key points you want to make or the ‘take-aways.’

Based on the submitted information gathering sheets, review of the history of the area, review of the CCP for Tetlin NWR and discussions on key topics and potential messages with Tim Lorenzini and Kevin Painter, the following are the key topics to be covered in the Interpretive Program in some way:

1. The value of Public Lands in Alaska
2. The role of the ALCAN in history of the area
3. The role of mining in history of the area
4. The lifestyle of the residents of the area, especially subsistence lifestyle
5. Athabascan history and lifestyle
6. Current challenges to management and sustainability, such as the challenge of invasive species (with messaging directed primarily at travelers).

The following are the messages to be communicated in the Interpretive Program. Sub-messages and supporting stories for each message, which can be found in the section on messages, provide the fodder for the Interpretive Network.

Primary Message 1: Public lands are critical to the lifestyle and quality of life of rural Alaskans.

Primary Message 2: Plants, fish and wildlife (including pollinators) depend on their specific habitat to survive, so people manage Public Lands to conserve those habitats.

Primary Message 3: Mining had and continues to have a significant impact on the cultural history of the area.

Primary Message 4: Impacts of placer mining can be mitigated, and the land restored.

Primary Message 5: Military importance of Alaska had and continues to have a significant impact on the cultural history and economy of the area.

Primary Message 6: Native Athabascan culture, which depends on the natural resources of the area, thrives in Eastern Interior Alaska.

Primary Message 7: Living in ‘Real Alaska’ requires ingenuity, perseverance and grit, but it is not what you see on Reality Television.

Primary Message 8: Transportation routes are the key to cultural activity and development in this area and the rest of the world.

Key Recommendations

Recommendations are organized by stage of the visitor experience. This plan covers the Arrival, Primary and Departure stages of a visitor experience specifically at the Visitor Center. The following section describes the future experience, with strategies noted in the narrative. Specific information about the strategies can be found in the section entitled 'Visitor Interpretive Experiences,' and the one entitled 'Design Concepts.'

Future Arrival Experience

Visitors easily find and identify the Tok Main Street Visitor Center, in part because it is on the Alaska Highway, and in part because of the **bronze sculpture of a group of caribou** between the Visitor Center and the Alaska Highway. The **re-designed parking area** is larger and easy for long vehicles to pull in and out. The expanse of asphalt is broken up by islands of vegetation, with clear walkways so visitors feel safer walking across the parking area to reach the building. Visitors park and follow directional signage to one of the two primary accesses into the Information Wing, identified in part by **'beacons'** (sculptures, works of art or other features that help identify the main access doors). They pass a **Native Plant Garden** along the way. For those who arrive when the center is closed, **Information Kiosks** containing orientation and wayfinding information and panels with message overview are available on the east and west sides of the Visitor Center.

Visitors enter into the Information Wing (south wing) of the building. There they encounter the following:

- A large mural entitled **'The People of Tok Welcome You!'** with the word 'Welcome' in several different languages, including the native languages spoken in the area.
- A staffed **Information Desk** where they can ask questions.
- An **area managed by the Chamber of Commerce** with an array of brochures and other information that will help them explore and enjoy Tok and the surrounding area. It also includes information on other parts of Alaska.
- **Trip planning area** with several comfortable lodge style chairs and tables arranged near the south facing windows and around a woodstove with a large glass/see-through door. Plug-ins near this area allow people to charge phones and other devices. The building has Wi-Fi, so people can sit and access the internet to find out more information about locations and to make reservations.
- Signage directing them to the restrooms.
- A **changeable exhibit space** focusing on upcoming events in the area.
- Items to impart an ambiance of Alaska, including mounts of mammals and bird, furs hanging on the walls and a caribou antler chandelier.
- A **'What's Happening' Display** – constantly updated – containing a variety of information in which people would be interested, including what is happening in relation to the new mine opening up near Tetlin Village.

Future Primary Experience: Exhibit Hall

Center: Visitors first encounter a large **3-D topographic map of the area**. The map would broadly highlight land status/ownership and the language groups of the Athabascans. On a reading rail around the outside are images and brief snippets of text relating to exhibits in the Exhibit Hall.

West Wing: Moving down the west wing, visitors encounter **Welcome to the Fortymile Country**, which provides an overview of the key stories associated with the area, including the role of gold mining in causing a major cultural shift in the area, the role of the BLM in managing the area for multiple use, and the array of recreational opportunities.

The center of the wing contains an extensive exhibit on **Gold Mining** with several components focusing on different strategies for mining gold, with one on placer mining, another on dredge mining, another on hydraulic mining, and another on reclamation of dredged streambeds. Finally, it includes a component focusing on the uses of gold for purposes other than jewelry, with emphasis on the point that gold mines exist because the public demands a lot of products that contain gold as an essential material.

The far end of the west wing contains exhibit components focusing on **Historic Fort Egbert** and the town of **Eagle**. The emphasis is on the history and what remains now that visitors can see and experience.

Along the south wall of the west wing visitors encounter an extensive exhibit focusing on the Athabaskan culture (**We Thrive Here**).

The primary exhibit on the north wall of the wing is a combination of **Linking Eagle to the Outside World** and **Getting Around in Alaska**. It begins with a focus on the Yukon River and boats, followed by a component on the historic Valdez-Eagle trail, the telegraph linking Eagle to the contiguous United States, the use of sled dogs and pack dogs, the use of snow machines, the building of the ALCAN, and finally, the use of small planes.

East Wall: Exhibits on the East Wall focus on the Tetlin Passage from Tok to the border with Canada (**Tetlin Passage Over Time**), which includes:

- The migration of people through the remnants of the ice sheet to populate the rest of North and South America
- The progression of people and wildlife who have used the transportation corridor
- What biological organisms might use it in the future as climate changes
- The building of the Alaska Highway by the military
- Historic roadhouses that sprang up to serve travelers
- Present-day use of the highway.

Supporting information focuses in large part on the impact on cultural activity and development due to the improvement in the transportation route.

North Wing – Northeast corner: The major exhibit in this area focuses on the importance of Tetlin NWR (**Tetlin NWR: Conserving Flora, Fauna, and Subsistence Lifestyle**). Exhibit components provide insight into the rights of people practicing a subsistence lifestyle to gather resources on Public Lands, the critical habitat for migratory species such as the Trumpeter Swan, what lives in the refuge, the issues with invasives and the role of fire in the ecosystem. It also includes a mount of an interior grizzly bear similar to the one that is in the center now.

North Wing: Northwest corner

This contains a diorama representing Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve and Yukon-Charlie National Park. It focuses on high elevation alpine areas, with reveals that help people discover what lives

in those ecosystems. It also contains a component focusing on the link between alpine and lowland areas with the intent of conveying the point that healthy uplands are a key to healthy lowlands. A taxidermy Dall sheep will be mounted high on the diorama.

Video / Presentation Room: The separate room on the north side of the building will be used to show videos associated with the stories presented in the Visitor Center, and to present programs, such as native craft work. This is also a place where the Chamber can hold meetings and functions, as necessary.

Events: The following are potential events that, if established and marketed, will cause visitors to plan visits to overlap with the events. Some of them may not be possible now or even in the near future due to the need for extensive planning and coordination, plus the issue of cost.

- Making the Mail Run
- Jack London Days (Gold Rush Days)
- Festival of the Northern Lights
- Guided Gold Panning Tour

Future Departure Experience

The emphasis is on motivating visitors to explore eastern central Alaska using Tok as a base rather than focusing on all of Alaska. To facilitate such exploration, visitors can pick up suggested itineraries for a variety of trips into the Fortymile country, along the ALCAN to the border crossing, a tour on the Top of the World Highway, and a trip into Wrangell St. Elias National Park.

Introduction

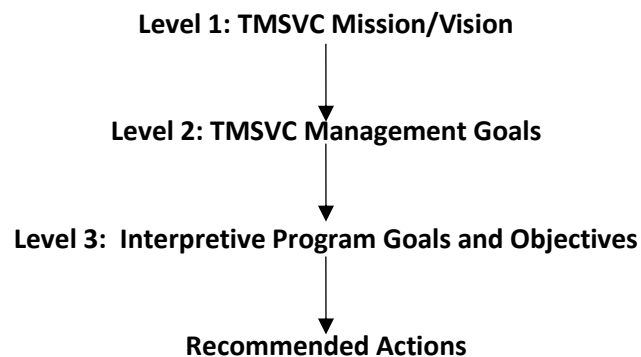
The Visitor Interpretive Experience Plan (VIEP) for the Tok Main Street Visitor Center (TMSVC) provides the key Goals and Objectives to achieve, Messages to communicate, and Recommendations for the Information/Interpretive Network to support visitor experiences associated with the Visitor Center. That information network includes the orientation, wayfinding, trip planning and interpretive information located in and around the building. Because this is a plan for the Visitor Center alone, it does not include the information network components prior to a visitor arriving, such as a website, nor the network components to support exploration of the area, such as an Audio Auto Tour Podcast. Those will be critical components to develop to maximize the effectiveness of the opportunities in the Visitor Center and achieve the overall Goals and Objectives.

The Goals and Objectives, Messaging, Recommended Visitor Experiences (including identification of the Information/Interpretive Network components) and Design Concepts are included in the main document. The background information on which the plan is based – Target Audience Profiles, Parameters and Implications, and Interpretive Inventory, can be found in the Appendices. Input on objectives and messaging by stakeholders can also be found in the Appendices.

Goal Hierarchy

VIEP Goal Hierarchy Structure

The VIEP takes its direction (**Interpretive Goals** from the **Management Goals** for the TMSVC, which reflect how the managing entities intend to achieve the **Mission/Vision** for the Visitor Center. The **Objectives** reflect impacts on the behavior, knowledge, and attitude of the target audiences, which, if achieved, result in progress toward the **Interpretive Goals** and consequently, the Management Goals. The recommendations focus on achieving the desired impacts on target audiences. All those elements have been captured in the hierarchical structure depicted below.



The structure of the goal hierarchy reflects several significant points. First, everything stems from the Mission/Vision for the Visitor Center. Second, the statements at each level, whether goals, missions, or vision, are derived from the statements of the level above. Determining each set of statements requires asking the question, “how can this [goal, outcome, mission] help achieve the next level up?” For example, the Interpretive Program Goals for TMSVC were determined by asking, “How can an Interpretive Program help achieve the Management Goals?” The structure clearly shows the link between the purposes for which the refuge is managed, and the recommended actions associated with developing Visitor Interpretive Experiences.

One of challenges in developing the Goal Hierarchy for this project is to effectively blend the Management Goals of multiple Public Land management agencies involved in the Center and those of the Tok Chamber of Commerce, a key stakeholder and owner of the building. The solution was to find areas of agreement and avoid areas of direct conflict. With that in mind, the Goal Hierarchy reflects value of the Public Lands, with the end goal of increased support for the managing entities, while also promoting the recreational value of those lands as a way to increase the attraction and holding power of the area for tourists, which will benefit the Chamber of Commerce. This is consistent with NWRS Goals, notably, *“Provide and enhance opportunities to participate in compatible wildlife-dependent recreation (hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education, and interpretation).”*

Level 1: Tok Main Street Visitor Center Mission/Vision

The following is the mission of the TMSVC:

The mission of the Tok Main Street Visitor Center is to promote appropriate use of and support for Public Lands in Eastern Interior Alaska by visitors to the area, with the intent of an increased level of stewardship by visitors and an extended length of stay in the area.

This addresses both a major goal of Public Land Management agencies, which is appropriate use of the resources they administer, and a major goal of the Tok Chamber of Commerce, which is increased use of nearby Public Lands by visitors, which should directly translate into visitors staying longer in the area, leading to an increased revenue stream.

Note: *In this case, appropriate use of Public Lands depends on the managing entity.*

Level 2: Tok Main Street Visitor Center Management Goals

The following Management Goals apply to one or more of the partners but as a whole, do not conflict with each other.

1. Increase use of the TMSVC by travelers on the ALCAN.
2. Increase awareness by travelers of the wide array of recreational opportunities on surrounding Public Lands, motivation to spend time on Public Lands in the area and facilitate visitors taking advantage of those opportunities.
3. Increase awareness of the value of Public Lands in Alaska, the need to conserve those Public Lands, and support for the management agencies.
4. Decrease issues between visitors and residents, including with the Athabascan communities in the area.

Level 3: Interpretive Program Goals and Objectives

Introduction

Interpretive Program Goals and Objectives focus on the desired impacts and outcomes from the interpretive opportunities that are a key part of Visitor Interpretive Experiences at the TMSVC and in extended experiences after their visit. Although measurable objectives are preferred, eliminating potential objectives because of the difficulty in measuring them results in an incomplete picture of what content should be included in the Interpretive Network. For example, an objective that focuses on appropriate use of Public Lands is outside the capability of the management agencies to measure. However, eliminating the objective because of difficulty measuring to ascertain impact would also eliminate the message that the exhibit designer needs to include on use of Public Lands. Consequently, if measurement is not possible, potential indicators have been identified. As an example, a significant reduction in warnings and tickets written to visitors for violating use regulations could be considered an indicator of effectiveness of

interpretive information focusing on appropriate use of resources. Indicators do not, by themselves, indicate success, but they do provide guidance for what to include in the Interpretive Network.

In general, objectives and indicators all lie in one of following five categories, four of which managing entities have some degree of control over: interest, education, motivation, facilitation and action. If the goal is for people to act, the first step is to create interest to the point that visitors want more information (education), which can be offered in the form of publications, classes, interpretation, environmental education, etc. Within education, the audience must be motivated to engage in desired behaviors. The fourth category – facilitation – is about removing or minimizing barriers to encourage people to act.

Note: *The potential Objectives and Indicators included are examples and are not meant to be an exhaustive list, but just a means of generating feedback and more ideas.*

Interpretive Program Goal 1: Increase appropriate recreational use of and expand seasonality of use on nearby Public Lands by visitors.

Note: *'Appropriate' indicates recreational use that is consistent with sustainable use of the public lands in accordance with the rules and regulations of the managing entity.*

Discussion: This is directly connected to supporting tourism, and therefore, supporting the Chamber of Commerce. The more time visitors spend engaging in recreational activities in the area, the more likely they are to spend nights in Tok, buy meals in Tok and buy supplies in Tok.

Potential Indicators

- Significant increase in use of campgrounds by visitors.
- Significant increase in number of visitors taking guided tours, such as on float trips.
- Significant increase in use of the resources of local public land CSUs by visitors.
- Significant lengthening of period of year during which visitors use public land CSUs.
- Significant increase in the number of visitors who are aware of the recreational opportunities on nearby Public Lands. (This assumes that one reason visitors do not spend time on nearby Public Lands is that they are unaware of the opportunities and consequently, never consider spending time in the area while on the way to Denali, Kenai or other locations out of the area.)
- Degradation (trash, tramping of vegetation, etc.) will decrease in relation to the number of people using the resources.
- Increase in number of recreational businesses supporting tourism.
- Significant increase in use of hotels/BNB's, etc.
- Significant increase in visitors engaging in recreation on Public Lands during shoulder seasons.
- Demand for outdoor recreation equipment rentals (such as ATVs and UTVs) and services, will result in the establishment of businesses that rent such equipment and ones that provide guided outs. (No business exists at this time that rents equipment or provides guided tours.)

Interpretive Program Goal 2: Increase level of stewardship on the part of visitors (*become better stewards of natural and cultural resources*), including recreating responsibly.

Discussion: Visitors and residents alike depend on the natural resources. Residents depend on those resources for sustaining their way of life. Visitors depend on those resources for recreational opportunities. Therefore, it is important that those resources be conserved to ensure long-term support for the lifestyle of the residents and support for nature-based recreation, which supports tourism.

Objective 2-1: Visitors will take measures to minimize the potential for carrying invasive species into the region prior to arrival. (This includes actions such as using a boot brush to clean boots and shoes, washing their car and boat, and cleaning their gear.) (Note: This requires providing information prior to travelers arriving.)

Potential Indicators

- A decrease in aquatic invasives, such as zebra mussels, New Zealand mud snails, Elodia (aquatic plant), whirling disease, etc. introduced by visitors.
- A decrease in terrestrial invasives, such as White/yellow sweetclover, bird vetch, hawkweed, and species that are moving up from the lower 48 and Canada that are transported on vehicles, footwear, recreation gear, etc.
- An increase in visitors who ask what they can do to decrease propagation of invasive plant species.
- An increase in use of the Alaska invasive species identification Application by travelers.
- A decrease in aquatic invasive species found on boats during inspection at the border crossing. (Note that achieving this indicator requires relevant information being communicated to visitors prior to their arrival.)

Objective 2-2: The percentage of visitors who recreate responsibly on Public Lands will increase significantly.

Potential Indicators

- Significant increase in visitor use of nearby public lands without substantial increases in the needs for trash removal or user conflict.
- Significant reduction in confirmed violations per capita/group of users.
- Decreased number of SARs. (The number of visitor fatalities in WRST has increased in recent years and highlights the need to increase preventative search and rescue, back-country safety, and other safety messaging for visitors at all contact stations.)

Interpretive Program Goal 3: Increase support for entities who manage public lands (this includes increased support for management decisions).

Objective 3-1: A significant increase in the awareness that although different Public Lands are managed for different purposes, as a whole, they provide the necessary support for subsistence lifestyle in Alaska and support for extraction industries such as hunting, fishing, trapping, logging and mining.

Potential Indicators

- A significant decrease in conflicts between visitors and other user groups.
- A reduction in complaints regarding acceptable consumptive uses on Public Lands by 10% a year for the next 10 years.
- Establishment of a 'Friends Group' that includes local members for federal/state resource management agencies.
- An increase in public participation in public scoping for projects.
- An increase in the ratio of positive to negative comments on social media regarding resource management entities.
- An increase in understanding regarding different types of land use and why they matter for Alaska. For example, Fortymile WSR is a Wild and Scenic River (WSR) and important habitat area, but it allows placer mining and offers other traditional uses.

Objective 3-2: An increase in support for Public Land management entities, both by visitors and residents.

Potential Indicators

- A significantly higher ratio of positive comments to negative comments about public land management agencies on social media.
- A significant increase in membership in Friends Groups associated with different public land management agencies.
- An increase in positive comments in comment boxes.

Interpretive Program Goal 4: All visitors feel welcome to Public Lands and safe when exploring the recreational opportunities on those lands and in nature in general.

Discussion: One of the significant issues with motivating visitors to spend time exploring the outdoors and engaging in recreational activities in Alaska is fear of nature, especially grizzly bears and, to a lesser extent, moose and wolves. Addressing those issues so people feel more comfortable spending time in the outdoors will contribute to visitors spending more time in the area.

Objective 4-1: A significant increase in percentage of visitors to the TMSVC spending more time in the surrounding area engaged in recreational opportunities on Public Lands.

Objective 4-2: A significant increase in the number of visitors engaged in recreational opportunities on nearby Public Lands, but ‘off the beaten path,’ such as remote campgrounds, public use cabins, and trail-heads.

Objective 4-3: A significantly higher percentage of people’s comments in log books and comment portals that reflect a positive experience on public lands and with agency staff.

Objective 4-4: A decrease in complaints relating to feelings of bias due to race or gender.

Interpretive Program Goal 5: Increased understanding of, interest in, and respect for the traditional lifestyle of rural Alaskans – both Native and non-native.

Discussion: Because exposure to Alaskan way of life for many visitors is primarily on reality television, they perceive that people who live here are ‘hanging on by a thread,’ when in fact, residents are often thriving, and they know how to live off the land comfortably. Although we do want to capitalize on the inherent interest visitors have in the lifestyle of residents, we do not want to give the impression that this is a dangerous place to visit.

Potential Indicators

- Increase in visitors requesting additional information on traditional Alaska Native culture and history.
- A decrease in per capita questions and comments that indicate misconceptions about indigenous people.

Message Hierarchy

Introduction

To avoid the information-driven or ‘encyclopedic’ approach to the interpretive opportunities, which has been determined to be ineffective, this plan uses a message-driven approach. Messages can be thought of the key points you want to make or the ‘take-aways.’

Note: *In the interpretive profession a ‘theme’ is the point you are trying to make, or the message you are trying to communicate, but for the lay person, a ‘theme’ is synonymous with ‘topic.’ Therefore, we use the term ‘message’ instead of theme.*

Based on the submitted information gathering sheets, review of the history of the area, review of the CCP for Tetlin NWR and discussions on key topics and potential messages with Tim Lorenzini and Kevin Painter, the following are the key topics to be covered in the Interpretive Program in some way:

1. The value of Public Lands in Alaska
2. The role of the ALCAN in history of the area
3. The role of mining in history of the area
4. The lifestyle of the residents of the area, especially subsistence lifestyle
5. Athabascan history and lifestyle
6. Current challenges to management and sustainability, such as the challenge of invasive species (with messaging directed primarily at travelers).

Note: *Although the plan is only for the TMSVC, this Message Hierarchy pertains to an Interpretive and Information Network covering a visitor’s experience in the entire area. Therefore, not all Sub-Messages and Supporting Stories are included in the opportunities in the Visitor Center but do apply to other parts of the visitor experience and should be used to develop associated interpretive opportunities in the area.*

Primary Message 1: Public lands are critical to the lifestyle and quality of life of rural Alaskans.

Discussion: Although the FWS is funding the planning and probably implementation of the plan, the TMSVC will function like an APLIC. In other words, the focus is on Public Lands and the agencies that administer them, which includes the USFWS, NPS, BLM, USFS, and the State of Alaska.

Sub-Messages and Supporting Stories include the following:

Sub-Message 1-1: Public Lands, including the National Wildlife Refuge, National Parks and Preserves, Bureau of Land Management lands (and other DOI/DOA agency lands) support subsistence lifestyle practiced by Native Alaskans and residents.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- The subsistence management programs of different federal agencies.

- There is a lot of past and present anthropological work quantifying pounds of meat used by residents in Tok and surrounding communities that indicates the importance of meat, fish and plants harvested from the area in their diets.
- Scientific work by agencies supporting sustainable harvests.
- The subsistence seasons for various species of animals and fish that are only available to rural Alaskan residents to help provide them an opportunity to subsist from the area's ecosystems.
- The right to collect wood and berries.

Sub-Message 1-2: Public lands support the cultural heritage of the native people of Alaska.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- Subsistence priority in ANILCA (founding document for several CSUs in Alaska).
- How Public Lands support ANILCA and native cultures by being managed for access for subsistence lifestyle-related activities.
- Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act – how it affects land use patterns and management, tribal sovereignty, tribal rights etc.

Sub-Message 1-3: Public lands support the lifestyle of rural Alaskans in myriad ways.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- The importance of hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, dog mushing, skiing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, and other outdoor activities on Public Lands that are a part of the way of life of residents.
- Gathering wood on Public Lands for heating homes, building homes.
- Rafting, skiing and other forms of recreation offered on Public Lands.
- Fish camps and hunting camps as a way to maintain familial, language, and/or cultural connections.

Sub-Message 1-4: Public lands provide a wide array of recreational opportunities, which contribute to the quality of life of residents, and which support the economy of the area through tourism.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- The number of visitors who engage in recreational opportunities on Public Lands, such as by hunting, fishing, hiking, riding ATVs, snowmobiling, skiing, gold panning, rafting, camping, etc. This should include emerging types of nonmotorized and motorized recreation, water sports, etc.

Sub-Message 1-5: Public lands support the local economy.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- The number of visitors who spend time in the area recreating on Public Lands – they buy food, shop locally, buy tours, etc.

- The number of local tour guides for whom a significant amount of income comes from guiding visitors on Public Lands.
- Mining on public lands attracts business and tourists.
- Infrastructure from mining, such as access roads into Fortymile country, supports tourism.
- Commercial mushroom harvesting post wildfires.
- Sale of arts and crafts created from subsistence use of the resources.

Primary Message 2: Plants, fish and wildlife (including pollinators) depend on their specific habitat to survive, so people manage Public Lands to conserve those habitats.

Discussion: This is a key concept that underlies most of the management activities of the FWS, and much of the activities of other Public Land Management agencies, which is to conserve and restore native flora and fauna. The addition of “. . . *specific* habitat . . .” provides the opportunity to emphasize that some species are adapted to specific habitats and will go extinct if the habitat disappears. It also provides the basis for understanding the impact of invasives.

Potential Sub-Messages include the following:

Sub-Message 2-1: People conserve habitat to conserve native flora and fauna that depend on those habitats for survival.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- The Upper Tanana Valley is the valley of great migrations. In particular, it is a very important wildlife migration corridor for waterfowl and migratory birds that summer in Alaska and as far away as Russia and migrate through this valley to the lower 48 and beyond to spend the fall and winter.
- The use of prescribed burns to maintain native habitat.
- Different bird species require different types of habitats, such as shorebirds requiring shallow water while ducks, swans and geese need deeper water.
- Different bird species use the same areas at different times because the right conditions are met for their needs at different times.
- Management of public lands reflects the value of different habitats associated with wild-fire succession because they support different species of wildlife.
- Wetlands filter water of impurities, thus they are critical to maintaining the quality of water many species depend on as part of their habitat.
- Habitat needed for survival of migratory species of birds and insects such as pollinators includes nesting and resting areas along their migration routes, so it must be preserved also. Without them, they will not survive. That is why the FWS protects key resting stops along migratory pathways in addition to breeding and wintering grounds to ensure the survival of migratory birds and insects such as pollinators.
- Regional and statewide programs dealing with invasives.
- Monitoring programs focused on sustaining the populations of specific species.
- Managing use to prevent degradation.
- Maintaining habitat needed for migrating caribou.

Sub-Message 2-2: Invasives, which are often brought in by visitors, threaten native flora, fauna and drinking water on which rural Alaskan lifestyle depends.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- Elodea clogs streams and greatly reduces the productivity of valued fish species in lakes and streams.
- Invasive crustaceans that could come in by hitch-hiking on a boat that is being transported from Canada or lower 48 to Alaska, such as New Zealand Mud Snail, Zebra Mussels, etc. damage the habitats on which native aquatic species depend.
- Invasive plants such as hawkweed take over meadows and greatly decrease the meadow's productivity.
- Invasive riparian species such as tansy ragwort overtake wetlands and small waterways and kill off valuable and diverse riparian shrub species that moose and other wildlife rely on.
- Alaska banned "felt" soled waders several years ago to stop invasive microscopic species like Whirling Disease and small invasive crustaceans, which can kill 90% of trout species if they get into a water system.

Sub-theme 2-3: Every part of an ecosystem, including the forces that shaped and continue to shape it (such as naturally occurring wildfire) play an important role in nutrient cycling, which is a key to the health of that ecosystem and the subsequent conservation of healthy populations of fish and wildlife.

Examples of supporting stories

- The role of fire in nutrient cycling and creating habitat for species such as moose that need early successional hardwood forests.
- The role of predators in nutrient cycling and maintaining healthy populations of prey species.

Primary Message 3: Mining had and continues to have a significant impact on the cultural history of the area.

Discussion: The two most significant factors affecting development of the region are mining the ALCAN.

Potential Sub-Messages include the following:

Sub-Message 3-1: Discovery of gold attracted the first EuroAmericans and led to increased use of existing transportation routes established by native Alaskans, greater connectivity to the outside world, establishment of towns and services and influx of more outsiders.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- Klondike gold rush route through Skagway/Canada/Yukon River.
- Eagle/Valdez trail construction.

- Telegraph wire construction.
- Henry T. Allen trip mapping the Tanana and Yukon Rivers, documenting Kennecott copper resources (impetus for mapping excursion in part due to belief that the area contained gold deposits). (Note: This could be part of the military story too since he was an Army officer at the time of his expedition.)
- Use of Taylor Highway post WWII construction, which was due in part to the gold deposits in the area.
- Discovery of gold in Chisana brought Carl F Whitham to the area. He ultimately started the Nabesna Mine and petitioned a road to be built to Nabesna to help deliver mail to Chisana. The post office approved the road, which led to construction of the Nabesna road.
- Gold mining helped establish the town of Eagle and the building of Fort Egbert.
- Many transportation routes established to support gold mining are still used today for travel and recreation.

Sub-Message 3-2: Gold mining in this area shaped and continues to shape the lives of many residents here and in the rest of Alaska.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- Many residents of Anchorage grew up on family mine claims in the Tok and Fortymile country.
- Many residents of Tok and the Fortymile area still mine for gold.
- Many early families of miners were multi-cultural.

Sub-Message 3-3: Mining continues to play a key role in the economy of the area.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- The economic impact of the new mine on Tetlin Tribal lands.
- Small and medium size mines in Fortymile country providing employment and income.

Sub-Message 3-4: Mining in Alaska and elsewhere, not just gold mining, is important for creating a green economy and sustaining your quality of life.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- The need for mined minerals to create lithium batteries and electric cars.
- The fact that 23 of the 39 critical minerals can be found in Alaska – the state just does not have the infrastructure to support mining of those minerals.
- Gold is used in myriad ways, in addition to jewelry, to create products supporting typical lifestyles of people in the lower 48.

Primary Message 4: Impacts of placer mining can be mitigated, and the land re-stored.

Discussion: Mining is often thought of as a ‘bad’ thing for the environment, and can be, but it often does not have nearly the negative impacts that people assume it has, especially if those impacts are mitigated. This is especially true of placer mining.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- The story of Jack Wade Creek.
- Demonstration projects in the Fortymile Country on reclamation techniques.
- Technical assistance projects with miners in the Fortymile Country.
- RESOLVE work with Apple/Tiffany jewelers to develop “sustainable gold.”

Primary Message 5: Military importance of Alaska had and continues to have a significant impact on the cultural history and economy of the area.

Discussion: As noted, this was one of the most significant factors affecting development of the region.

Potential Sub-Messages include the following:

Sub-Message 5-1: Construction of the ALCAN, although for military purposes, opened up the area to more settlement and economic endeavors.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- The early years of the ALCAN established a need for roadhouses. (Note: It will be necessary to provide basic information on the ALCAN to establish context, but this is not a story about the ALCAN so much as it is a story about the impact of building the ALCAN on the people of the area.)
- The increase in number of people coming to live in the area following construction of the highway.
- Increase in the number and type of economic ventures established following construction of the highway.
- Long before WWII, the US government and military were mapping and describing this area (1885 by Lieutenant Henry Allen). (See March 27.2022 Anchorage Daily News article for more information.)
- With several large army posts, air force bases, and the largest Coast Guard in the nation at Kodiak, the TMSVC/APLIC is the unofficial “Welcome to Alaska” Visitor Center for these military personnel and their families. This makes visiting the TMSVC a milestone within these family’s journey and life.

Sub-Message 5-2: The ALCAN plays a key role in tourism, an important part of the economy of the area.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- Most overland tourists coming to the area use the ALCAN.
- Trips on the ALCAN have been a trip of lifetime for nearly 80 years for families and retirees in the lower 48.
- Many visitors fly from Europe to Whitehorse, YT, rent an RV and travel the ALCAN to Tok and into AK and back.
- Northern latitudes have only gotten more popular as get away destinations as southern areas and public lands get more crowded and climate change drives up summer temperatures in southern outdoor locations.

Sub-Message 5-3: As the primary overland transportation link connecting Alaska to Canada and the lower 48 states, the ALCAN is a critical supply route for Eastern Interior Alaska.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- A significant portion of goods coming to Eastern Interior Alaska come by way of the ALCAN.

Sub-Message 5-4: Other important infrastructural components used by rural Alaskans and visitors came about because of military needs.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- The airfields, such as Northway, built as refueling stops for fighter planes headed to battlefields in Europe during World War II.
- The creation of transportation routes by the military that created a ‘crossroads’ in Tok helped establish the community.
- The construction of the Taylor Highway by the Alaska Road Commission.
- Reeve’s Field in WRST used during the building of Northway.
- Telegraph to Eagle was initially put up by the military.

Sub-Message 5-5: Establishment of Fort Egbert by the US Army led to a number of improvements in the area and consequent impacts on cultural development.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- Construction of the Eagle-to-Valdez Trail and consequent impact on cultural development along the route and in Eagle.
- Construction of the telegraph linking Eagle to the contiguous United States and the impact of that development.

Primary Message 6: Native Athabascan culture, which depends on the natural resources of the area, thrives in Eastern Interior Alaska.

Discussion: This is put in as a placeholder because the message needs to be developed by the Native Athabascan Communities – their story is theirs to tell. We need to know if they even want to tell part of their story and if so, what key message(s) they want to communicate. The ones proposed here reflect the dependence on natural resources and Public Lands. They are also messages that many native peoples want to communicate – that their culture is still alive and thriving rather than something of the past.

Note: *Potential Sub-Messages and Supporting Stories can be identified, but the Messages, Sub-Messages and Supporting Stories should come from the Athabascan community.*

Potential Sub-Message 6-1: Our subsistence uses are still rooted in our practices of spiritual, ceremonial, and communal sharing.

Potential Sub-Message 6-2: Our culture is still rooted in the natural world but is still contemporary.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- Information associated with elements of the ‘Native Athabascan Values’ that support being rooted in the natural world.
- Native Athabascan arts and crafts reflect lives shaped by the natural environment.
- These are our traditional homelands.
- We are still here, living from the land as our ancestors and elders have taught us to do.
- Harvesting food is based in part on wildlife migration and plant harvest seasons.
- Seasons are often referred to in terms of what is being harvested or going to be harvested (duck season, before duck season, etc.)
- Our people live in the modern world and make use of tools to increase efficiency, but their culture is still rooted in the natural environment, as it has for thousands of years.
- Modern Athabascan culture incorporates new technology just like any other group while maintaining similar harvest structures and timing.

Primary Message 7: Living in ‘Real Alaska’ requires ingenuity, perseverance and grit, but it is not what you see on Reality Television.

Discussion: Because exposure to Alaskan way of life for many visitors is primarily on reality television, they perceive that people who live here are ‘hanging on by a thread.’ We want to capitalize on the inherent interest visitors have in the lifestyle of residents but want to portray native rural Alaskans as ingenious and self-reliant people who choose to live here and can do so comfortably because of their knowledge and skill rather than desperate people hanging on by a thread.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- People cut their own wood, build their cabins, hunt their own food, collect plants, sew fur, and experiment in new adventures in Alaska because of their skill, knowledge and self-reliant attitude.
- People thriving rather than just surviving.
- People breaking down large machines, such as D-9s, transporting them piece by piece to remote areas, and reassembling them.
- Stories of people thinking outside the box to achieve goals.
- People doing whatever they can to live here because they want to, not because they have to.

Primary Message 8: Transportation routes are the key to cultural activity and development in this area and the rest of the world.

Discussion: This is a basic universal concept, consequently, it helps people understand areas outside the Project Area, including where they live. That is not the only reason for including it in this plan. Many of the stories associated with the area tie back to transportation routes and their impact on way of life and cultural activity, including the building of the ALCAN, the presence of the Yukon River, the presence of the Tetlin Valley (land of Great Migrations), and the building of the Eagle-Valdez Trail. Consequently, it is very useful as a tool to ensure that exhibits containing these stories are message-driven rather than information-driven. In other words, it provides direction on what information to include.

Examples of Supporting Stories

- The impact of the ALCAN on cultural activity and development in east-central interior Alaska, including Tok.
- The impact of the presence of the Yukon River on location of native settlements and early EuroAmerican settlements, notably, the town of Eagle.
- The impact of the building of the Eagle-Valdez trail on cultural activity and development.
- The use of small streams by miners as transportation routes into areas to mine for gold.
- The impact of the Tanana River and valley on settlement by native Athabascans and exploration by EuroAmericans (Allen's expedition).

Information Network Concept

Introduction

The information network necessary to support a visitor experience is based on the stages of a visitor experience, which are as follows:

Stage	Needs	Comments
Pre-Trip	Trip promotion information Trip planning information	This is the information on your website
Travel	Orientation and wayfinding information	This consists of what is available on GPS, what visitor can print out before they arrive, maps and signage, including directional signage along the route.
Arrival	On-site wayfinding to parking and facilities; restrooms; map and site-specific trip planning information.	The site needs proper and adequate signage for parking spaces for RVs, cars, and disabled drivers. It also needs adequate signage for the entrance of the Visitor Center, hours of operation, and after-hours information.
Primary	Wayfinding and orientation to navigate the site. Interpretive information	The site needs creative and informative signage and layouts for directing visitors to restrooms, information desk, trip planning, Exhibit Hall and Multipurpose Room.
Departure	Restrooms and directions to other sites to visit.	This is the point they are most likely to purchase items, donate money, etc.
Return	Orientation and wayfinding	For travelers exiting Alaska, signs at the exit from the Visitor Center directing people to Canada. For people coming from Canada, signs are needed for Fairbanks, the Tok Cutoff and Top-of-the-World Highway.
Post Trip	Follow-up information on the stories that offer more depth and detail.	Ideally, you will have obtained email address so you can keep visitors apprised of upcoming events, work parties, programs, etc. Also, it would be beneficial to obtain recommendations to TMSVC, evaluations of the experience, and suggestions on what can be done better.

This contract only covers the **Arrival, Primary and Departure Experiences** as they relate to the facility. However, suggestions for information strategies necessary to support these stages of the experience will be noted when possible.

Guidelines

In addition to the stages of a typical Visitor Experience, the following key guidelines were used to help guide developing recommendations:

1. The intent of the interpretive opportunities in the TMSVC is not to educate visitors on particular topics, but to pique their interest to the point they are motivated to find out more about those topics and ideally, to spend time exploring the surrounding area to learn more.

2. Interpretive opportunities will be selected and developed to communicate the messages in the Message Hierarchy by communicating the supporting stories.
3. The positive connection between humans, specifically the quality of life of residents and travelers, and Public Lands will be emphasized whenever possible, with emphasis on human life today.

Visitor Interpretive Experiences

Introduction

This is a plan for the Tok Main Street Visitor Center, so it only covers the Arrival, Primary and Departure Experience for that part of a visitor's trip to the Center. However, thought should be given to the parts of the Visitor Experience that occur before a visitor arrives – Pre-Trip (trip planning) and Travel – because we want visitors to plan to visit the Center and spend time in the Tok area, regardless of the direction they are traveling. That requires that they are aware of the TMSVC and also of the visitor opportunities in the area.

Note: In this plan, locations are as follows:

- **South:** Front of building facing the Alaska Highway
- **East:** Side with library
- **North:** Side closest to E. Slana Ave.
- **West:** Side closest to Center Street

On-Site Experience: Arrival

Introduction

The Arrival Experience involves first impressions, parking, using the restrooms, obtaining a map and any other orientation/wayfinding information, and conducting site-specific visit planning. It includes the area immediately outside the Visitor Center and the area in the south wing of the building where the Information Desk and trip planning area are located.

Aside from making visitors feel welcome, the goals of the information network in the Arrival Experience include the following:

- Direct people to the correct area to park and facilitate the transition from vehicular travelers to confident pedestrians, which requires travelers knowing where they are going when they exit their vehicles.
- Move visitors quickly, safely, and with little mental effort on their part from where they parked to the location where they can meet their needs (restrooms, drinking water, place to get a map). (This will vary depending on whether the facility is open or closed.)
- Motivate visitors to spend time engaging in the interpretive opportunities in the Visitor Center.
- Make visitors feel confident in their ability to find their way around what may be an unfamiliar environment (the region in which Tok is located).
- Address information needs of visitors who arrive “after-hours” or during the off season when the Visitor Center is closed.

New Arrival Experience

Visitors easily find and identify the Tok Main Street Visitor Center, in part because it is on the ALCAN, and in part because of the **bronze sculpture of a group of caribou** (in an outdoor diorama of similar terrain where they would be found) between the Visitor Center and the highway. Those travelers with RVs and trailers follow the signs to park in an area designed so long vehicles can get in and out easily.

Visitors park and follow directional signage to one of the two primary accesses into the Information Wing, as indicated on Figure 1 on page 32. Some type of ‘beacon (sculpture, banner, artwork or other visible feature) will be located near each entry to help attract visitors to the entry doors. For those who arrive when the center is closed, Information Kiosks containing orientation and wayfinding information and panels with message overview are available on the east and west sides of the Visitor Center.

Note: *Signage will be needed on the doorway between the parking area and the main Exhibit Hall to direct visitors to the main entryway. This former entry will now be an Emergency Exit only.*

Between the parking area and the entrance, visitors have the opportunity to explore a **Native Plant Garden**, with each plant accompanied by interpretive information on the role it plays in a subsistence lifestyle, and the role it plays in the ecosystem. In addition, the expanse of asphalt is broken up by islands of vegetation, and clear walkways established so visitors feel safe walking across the parking area to reach the building. This is especially important to families with small children.

Visitors enter into the Information Wing (south wing) of the building. There they encounter the following:

- A large mural entitled ‘**The People of Tok Welcome You!**’ with the word ‘Welcome’ in several different languages, including the native languages spoken in the area. This mural is behind the Information Desk and separates the Information Wing from the Exhibit Hall. The mural includes Athabascans, miners, trappers, military, and others. The point of the mural is to illustrate that that the population is made up of people from different cultural backgrounds and lifestyles.
- A staffed **Information Desk** where they can ask questions.
- An **area managed by the Chamber of Commerce** with an array of brochures and other information that will help them explore and enjoy Tok and the surrounding area. It also includes information on other parts of Alaska.
- **Trip planning area** with several comfortable lodge style chairs and tables arranged near the south facing windows and around a woodstove with a large glass/see-through door. Plug-ins near this area allow people to charge phones and other devices. The building has Wi-Fi, so people can sit and access the internet to find information and to make reservations.
- Durable flooring of wood or tile in this high foot traffic area and throw rugs to mitigate the sound acoustics.
- **Signage** directing them to the restrooms.
- A **changeable exhibit space** focusing on upcoming events in the area.
- Mounts of several different species of mammals on the walls and mounts of birds flying overhead towards the main exhibit area, including a shoulder- or European-mounted moose.
- Caribou antler chandelier.
- Furs hanging from the walls that visitors can feel.
- A **What’s Happening’ Display** – constantly updated – containing a variety of information in which people would be interested, including animal sightings (especially caribou herds and other charismatic megafauna), weather, and what is happening in relation to the new mine opening up near Tetlin Village. It not only helps keep locals informed, but also sends the message that gold mining continues to play a role in development of the area. This should be digital so it can easily be updated.

The ambiance created by the log structure, the mural, the wood stove, mounted heads of big game animals on the walls, furs on the wall and birds flying overhead make visitors feel that they have arrived in the 'real Alaska.'

Note: *One suggestion involved congratulating people on succeeding in driving to Alaska on the ALCAN. This is better suited to the Tetlin NWR Visitor Center that visitors encounter near the border crossing.*

The Information Desk is large enough to ensure space for two lanes for accessing information from staff. One of the lanes serves people seeking short answers to questions and the other serves those seeking in-depth information. When staffing allows, this will ensure that all visitors get some face time with staff and will also meet the needs of the visitor who wants to plan out weeks of their trip.

Visitors can gather information on places to visit, ask questions of the staff, and sit and conduct site-specific trip planning. This area is divided from the rest of the facility by the large mural, which is located at the intersection of the wing and the main building, just behind the Information Desk. If visitors need the restrooms immediately, directional signs direct them to the hallway with the restrooms, which is located just off the Exhibit Hall of the building. The view along the sight line from the Information Wing into the Exhibit Hall includes a mount of an interior grizzly bear, which adds to the attraction power of the space.

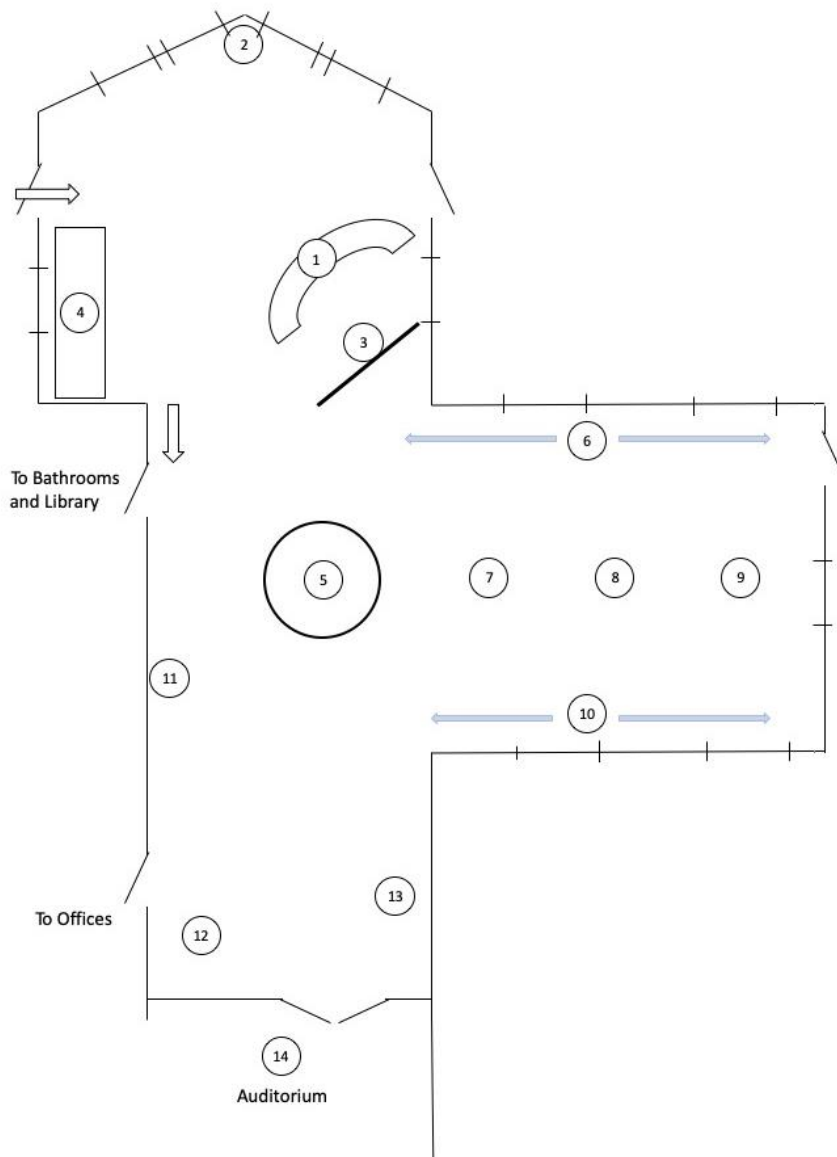
Upon exiting the hall with the restrooms, visitors can return to the Information Wing or visit the Exhibit Hall first and visit the Information Wing prior to departing. Either way, they pass back by the Information Wing in their Departure Experience, which makes it easy for them to pick up additional brochures associated with topics and areas that have piqued their interest.

Strategies and actions associated with new Arrival Experience

- Replace the large rocking chair outside the building with a bronze sculpture of a small group of caribou on a rock formation. The caribou should be oriented as if they are about to cross the highway (perpendicular to the roadway) and placed approximately directly in front of the prow of the south wing of the Visitor Center.
- Create a Native Plant Garden with interpretive information in front of the structure.
- Expand the parking area to include more of the space between the existing parking area and highway.
- Landscape the parking area.
- Develop a mural focusing on the people of Tok welcoming visitors. The intent is to convey that Tok (and the surrounding area) is a multi-cultural society.
- Eliminate the information counters in the main part of the building and put in an Information Desk in the Information Wing (see floor plan).
- Add directional signage in the Information Wing to the restrooms, Exhibit Hall and Multipurpose Room.
- Add several chairs and coffee tables arranged around a glass-doored woodstove at the south end of the Information Wing where visitors can conduct site-specific trip planning.
- Establish a space for highlighting upcoming events.
- Keep the mounted heads of big game animals on the walls and add a mount of a moose.
- Add mounted small mammals and birds in the rafters.
- Add taxidermy birds flying overhead.
- Add furs hanging on the walls.

- Add a caribou antler chandelier.
- Create an area for the Chamber of Commerce along the eastern portion of the wing.
- Create an easily updatable strategy, utilizing simply technology, for displaying current information on the new gold mine near Tetlin Village.
- Locate a mount of an interior grizzly bear in the Exhibit Hall so it can be seen from the Information Wing.

Suggested Floor Plan



1. Information Desk
2. Trip planning/wood stove
3. People of Tok mural
4. Chamber of Commerce area
5. Relief topographical model
6. Native Athabascans: We Thrive Here
7. Welcome to the Fortymile Country (Incl. BLM)
8. Gold Mining, Past, Present, Future (incl. Chicken)
9. Fort Egbert and Eagle
10. Linking Eagle to the Outside World/ Getting around in Alaska
11. Tetlin Passage (Incl. building ALCAN.)
12. Tetlin NWR: Conserving Flora, Fauna, and Way of Life
13. National Parks and Preserves
14. Videos & presentations

Figure 1: Concept Floor Plan

On-Site Primary Experience

Future Primary Experience

Note: All exhibits in the Exhibit Hall need to be movable so the floor can be cleared for events.

Reminder: The point of the exhibits is not to try to educate people on the history and natural history of the area, but rather to pique their interest enough on those topics to motivate them to use Tok as a hub to explore the Fortymile country, including Chicken and Eagle, part of the Tok Cutoff, and/or the ALCAN from Tok to the Beaver Creek crossing into Canada to experience the stories firsthand and to learn more through other strategies, such as the Auto Tour.

Note: For the most part, exhibits are low to ensure that they don't overpower the ambience of being in a log structure.

Center of Exhibit Hall

As visitors enter the Exhibit Hall from the Information Wing, their attention is drawn to a centrally located, large **3-D topographic map of the area**. The map broadly highlights land status/ownership and the language groups of the Athabascans. On a reading rail around the outside are images and brief snippets of text relating to exhibits in the Exhibit Hall. These are in the form of 'didjacks' with suggestions to engage with the exhibits to find out more. Ideally, major travel routes, such as the Tetlin Passage, the historic Valdez-Eagle trail, and others, could be simulated in some way (LED lights on the model or simple lines or swaths of color) to pique a visitor's interest in the meaning of the colored line or swath of color.

West Wing: Center

From there, visitors are likely to move down the west wing because it contains the majority of intriguing looking exhibits. The initial exhibit they encounter, **Welcome to the Fortymile Country**, located in the center of the space, provides an overview of the key stories associated with the area, including the role of gold mining in causing a major cultural shift in the area because it attracted large numbers of outsiders, the role of the BLM in managing the area for multiple use, and the array of recreational opportunities. It also focuses in part on the importance of the Fortymile River and feeder streams in the gold mining history of the area, including conveying the point that gold mining is still a current occupation and a continuing way of life, rather than something that is just historical. This exhibit sets the stage for the rest of the exhibits in the wing.

The next opportunity encountered in the center of the wing is an extensive exhibit on **Gold Mining** with several components focusing on different strategies for mining gold, with one on placer mining, another on dredge mining, another on hydraulic mining, and another on reclamation of dredged streambeds. Finally, it includes a component focusing on the uses of gold for purposes other than jewelry, with emphasis on the point that gold mines exist because the public demands a lot of products that contain gold as an essential material.

West Wing: End

The far end of the west wing contains exhibit components focusing on **Historic Fort Egbert** and the town of **Eagle**. The emphasis is on the history and what remains that visitors can see and experience. The latter is important because the intent of the exhibits is not to tell the whole story, but to whet visitors' appetites so they are interested in visiting Eagle and Fort Egbert.

West Wing: South Wall

Along the south wall of the west wing visitors encounter an extensive exhibit focusing on the Athabaskan culture (**We Thrive Here**). Note that developing this exhibit will require consultation with the Athabascans. The following are just ideas.

The first part of the exhibit is organized using a timeline approach to show people the impact of the arrival of whites, the impact of the resulting cultural shift, and the impact on traditional lifestyle of the Athabascans. It also has a component comparing how they used to travel and how they travel now, which includes the use of pack dogs and an actual snowmobile with a backdrop of an interior Alaska winter scene so visitors can sit on the machine and get their picture taken. Associated information focuses on the subsistence lifestyle practiced by many in the area with the intent of conveying the point that subsistence does not mean hanging on by a thread, that it is a choice, and that it depends heavily on natural resources, most of which come from Public Lands.

West Wing: North Wall

The primary exhibit on the north wall of the wing is a combination of **Linking Eagle to the Outside World** and **Getting Around in Alaska** because the evolution of transportation routes and travel to Eagle mirror what happened in the rest of Alaska. It begins with a focus on the Yukon River and boats, followed by components covering the historic Valdez-Eagle trail, the telegraph linking Eagle to the contiguous United States, the use of sled dogs and pack dogs, the use of snow machines, the building of the road to Eagle, and finally, the use of small planes. Each section focuses on the link to Eagle but should also indicate that this is just an example of what was happening in the rest of Alaska. If possible, a scaled down version (1:4) of a Super Cub could be hung from the ceiling

East Wall

After experiencing the exhibits in the west wing, visitors move to the east wall, where exhibits focus on the Tetlin Passage from Tok to the border with Canada (**Tetlin Passage Over Time**), with the first component on the right as you face the exhibit being the migration of people through the remnants of the ice sheet to populate the rest of North and South America. It includes components depicting the progression of people and wildlife who have used the transportation corridor, and what biological organisms might use it in the future as climate changes. The left side of the exhibit depicts the building of the AL-CAN by the military, historic roadhouses that sprang up to serve travelers, and present-day use of the highway. Supporting information focuses in large part on the impact on cultural activity and development in the area due to the improvement in the transportation route.

North Wing: Northeast corner

This exhibit uses a backdrop of the Alaska Range for a diorama focusing on the importance of Tetlin NWR (**Tetlin NWR: Conserving Flora, Fauna, and Subsistence Lifestyle**) to the indigenous people and in protecting the opportunity for rural residents to practice subsistence lifestyles today. In addition to exhibit components providing insight into the rights of people practicing a subsistence lifestyle to gather resources on Public Lands, the exhibit contains several components focusing on specific migratory species for which the Tetlin NWR contains critical habitat, such as the Trumpeter Swan. In keeping with the focus of the exhibits on the west wall of the wing, migration is emphasized, in this case by bird species. The information is all contained in a diorama of the boreal forest landscape that includes reveals

focusing on what lives there, the issues with invasives, the role of fire in the ecosystem, etc. It also includes a mount of an interior grizzly bear similar to the one that is in the center now.

Note: *The storage rooms will be removed, and space found elsewhere for what is stored in those rooms.*

North Wing: Northwest corner

This is also a diorama element but focusing on Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve and Yukon-Charlie National Park. The diorama focuses more on high elevation alpine areas, with reveals providing insight into some of the same stories as the diorama of the boreal forest, specifically, what lives in this habitat and how the National Parks and Preserve support subsistence lifestyle. It also contains a component focusing on the link between alpine and lowland areas with the intent of conveying the point that healthy uplands are a key to healthy lowlands. A taxidermy Dall sheep will be mounted high on the diorama.

Multipurpose Room

The separate room on the north side of the building will be used to show videos associated with the stories presented in the Visitor Center, and to present programs, such as native craft work. This is also a place where the Chamber can hold meetings and functions, as necessary.

Events

The following are potential events that, if established and marketed, will cause visitors to plan visits to overlap with the events. Some of them may not be possible now or even in the near future due to the need for extensive planning and coordination, plus the issue of cost.

- **Making the Mail Run:** Visitors learn about the conditions under which the mail run between Valdez and Eagle was conducted and have a chance to be pulled on a sled similar to ones used to haul mail by a team of dogs, or they could try their hand at pulling a loaded sled to get a feel for the weight dogs had to haul. The latter may be more feasible given that having sled dogs pulling sleds would require a local vendor willing to provide them. Note that the sleds would be on wheels due to lack of snow.
- **Jack London Days (Gold Rush Days):** This event focuses on the gold mining history of the area with emphasis on the Klondike gold strike and the impact of that strike on development of the area. It could also include the gold strikes at Chisana, Chicken and Eagle. Visitors have the opportunity to pan for gold.
- **Festival of the Northern Lights:** This event, held in late August when the probability of northern lights is at its highest, includes van tours to locations outside of town where the view of the night skies is not hampered by light from the town. Presentations on these tours include the northern lights if they are present, identification of constellations and other features in the night sky and the interpretation of the constellations in the night sky by Athabascans. Events during the day include presentations explaining the phenomenon of northern lights, including videos of the northern lights. It also includes a photography exhibit featuring images of the northern lights and night sky taken in the area.
- **Guided Gold Panning Tour:** This tour takes visitors into the Fortymile Country to Chicken and the surrounding area where they visit the dredge, a reclaimed stream, and an active gold-mining operation(s) and get the opportunity to pan for gold.

Strategies to Support Future Primary Experience

- Remove all existing exhibits and the Information Desk from the Exhibit Hall.
- Move all trip planning and visitor services to the Information Wing
- Develop a set of presentations for the Multipurpose Room, including native crafts, videos/presentations of the Aurora Borealis, wildlife photography contests, etc.
- Events.
- New set of interior exhibits that include the following:
 - **Relief Topographic Model** of area.
 - **Native Athabascans: We Thrive Here** (Exhibit on the Native Athabascans).
 - **Welcome to the Fortymile Country.**
 - **Gold Mining Past, Present and Future.** This includes a focus on Chicken.
 - **Fort Egbert and Eagle.**
 - **Linking Eagle to the Outside World/Getting Around in Alaska.**
 - **Tetlin Passage Over Time** (includes building of the ALCAN).
 - **Tetlin NWR: Conserving Flora, Fauna and a Way of Life.** Note that this includes the issue with invasives and the role of naturally occurring wildfire.
 - **The National Parks/Preserves.**

On-Site Experience: Departure

A typical Departure Experience includes a visit to the restrooms and any questions for the staff at the counter. It may involve collecting brochures and other materials on possible experiences after they leave, including ones in the rest of Alaska.

Future Departure Experience

Visitors still have the option of using the restrooms and picking up information on potential experiences in Alaska, but the emphasis is on exploring eastern central Alaska using Tok as a base rather than focusing on all of Alaska. To facilitate such exploration, visitors can pick up suggested itineraries for a variety of trips into the Fortymile country, along the ALCAN to the border crossing, a tour on the Top of the World Highway, and a trip into the Wrangell St. Elias National Park.

Note: We recommend developing a new Auto Tour covering a loop starting in Tok and including the Taylor Highway, Top of the World Highway and the ALCAN. Visitors would be able to select the section they are traveling. This should be an Application (App) that is downloadable onto smart phones so people can listen while they drive. The stories are those included in the exhibits, but the Auto Tour contains more detail. Ideally, the voices are those of (or that at least mimic) the characters in the area, such as a gold miner, a native Athabaskan, a person who has adopted a subsistence lifestyle, etc. Prior to a new Auto Tour being developed, visitors should have the option of downloading the existing Tetlin Refuge Auto Tour on the Visitor Center Wi-Fi.

Strategies to Support Future Departure Experience

- Suggested itineraries for trips up the Taylor Highway to Eagle, a trip on the Top of the World Highway, a trip down the ALCAN, a trip on the Tok Cutoff and into Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, and points of interest along the Alaska Highway on the way to Fairbanks.

- Suggested activities in the Tok area, such as guided trips on ATVs along a loop using the historic trail used for the mail run to Eagle, a trip to Eagle by small plane (note that some of these need to be developed), walking and biking trails within 10-minute drive of the TMSVC, such as Tetlin Refuge Headquarters nature trail, etc.
- Opportunity to download existing Tetlin Refuge Auto Tour (both south and north bound versions) on Visitor Center Wi-Fi.

Design Concepts

Introduction

Design concepts are not intended to be designs, or even rough designs. That would provide an obstacle to designers doing what they do best – design. The purpose of the design concepts is to help clarify the intent of a strategy and provide a starting place for developing designs.

The following section includes Design Concepts for all elements noted in the Arrival, Primary and Departure Experiences, except for the Videos and Presentations and Events because objectives and messaging for such opportunities depends on the opportunity.

Note: *In addition to the exhibit specifically on Athabascans, their story should be woven into as many additional exhibits as possible. All exhibit components that include Athabascans, especially the primary exhibit, requires working closely with the Athabaskan people to develop the exhibit components.*

Strategies to Enhance Initial Arrival Experience

The strategies to enhance the initial Arrival Experience, which is the part of the experience between when a visitor arrives at the site and the point where they are approaching the building as pedestrian, include changes to the infrastructure in addition to a few information strategies. They include the following:

- Develop a series of bronze sculptures depicting a herd of caribou about to cross the highway.
- Develop more prominent signage identifying the site and locating it so approaching drivers can easily see it in enough time to turn.
- Develop awareness signage along the highway to let drivers know that they are approaching the Visitor Center.
- Redesign the parking area to cover part of the grassy area between the building and the highway and to create spaces that are easy for people driving RVs and hauling trailers to pull in and out of.
- Drill a new well and remove the existing standpipe currently located within the parking area and cap the old well.
- Install directional signage along with arrows on the parking area to guide people with long vehicles to the parking areas designated for such vehicles.
- Install highly visible features ('beacons') near the primary Visitor Center entrance doors to draw the attention of visitors in the parking lot to the appropriate entrances. 'Beacons' could include sculptures, art, banners, etc.
- Install directional signage guiding people to the entry doors.
- Put signage on the doorway between the parking area and main Exhibit Hall indicating that it is not an entry (Emergency Exit).
- Consider removing some trees so the building can be seen more clearly from a distance as people approach from the East.
- Install two kiosks (on the east and west sides of the Visitor Center) containing an Area Orientation Panel with information on the recreational opportunities and attractions located along the different routes, a Recreating Safely Panel, wayfinding information associated with the different routes out of Tok, a space to put information on a temporary basis (such as marketing a

program or opportunity), and a brochure holder with a map of the area. This should have an inset map of Tok with a 'You Are Here.'

Information Kiosk (Exterior)

Location

Just outside visitor facility, near main entries.

Objectives

After interacting with the information on the panels visitors will:

- Have had most if not all their orientation and wayfinding questions answered, especially, "What is there to do here?"
- Be excited about exploring Tok and the surrounding area.
- Have all the information they need for their desired experience (including a map).
- Know how to download and use the Audio Auto Tour Podcast (after it has been developed).
- Be aware that the TMSVC offers programs and stages events (and have a copy of the event and program schedule), and that they can receive information on upcoming events and programs via email if they supply their email address.
- Be aware of basic hazards and how to avoid them.

Description and Concept

This is a simple structure containing a 'Welcome to Tok' Orientation Panel, Area Orientation Panel, Recreating Safely Panel, a brochure holder for distributing a map and a changeable space for posting information on upcoming events. Although the Visitor Center will still have an Information Desk, the lobby can get quite crowded during heavy visitation periods in the summer. The Information Kiosks could be utilized during those times to provide similar service as the interior Information Desk and to provide information when the building is closed.

Area Orientation Panel

Location

On the Information Kiosks.

Objectives

After interacting with this opportunity, visitors will:

- Be comfortable in their ability to find their way around the area.
- Know where they are in relation to major roads, towns and destinations in the area.
- Be motivated to explore the region.

Design Concept

The keys to effective orientation panels are to limit information to that which is useful; orient it in the direction people are facing when reading the map (if possible); use the same map as used in other maps of the area (such as on brochures); and use a 3-dimensional perspective.

At a minimum, the Area Orientation Panel should contain the following:

- Map of the area with basic features of importance to the traveler, such as roads, key destinations and communities.
- Mileages and travel times to destinations in the area, in miles and kilometers, and in terms of travel time.
- A "You Are Here."
- Visuals of key recreational opportunities in the area linked to specific locations.
- Public land campgrounds in the area.
- North arrow.
- Inset map of Tok.

One possible approach is to use a stylized three-dimensional representation of the area from an oblique aerial perspective as the basis for the map. Although this is more expensive to produce because it is a custom illustration, a three-dimensional representation is easier for most visitors to use. If this is not possible, a flat map would be used. Key locations and features would be enlarged to reflect significance and make it easy for users to find key locations.

Images of key recreational opportunities would be arranged around the perimeter with graphic elements (lines) connecting the image to the appropriate location on the map. The images could include, but are not limited to, visiting Fort Egbert or the historic district in Eagle, hiking a trail in the Fortymile Country, panning for gold, visiting the FWS Visitor Center near the border with Canada, driving up the road in the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park/Preserve, etc. The intent is not to provide people with all the information to visit those places and engage in the recreational opportunities, but rather to communicate the fact that the area has a large array of opportunities for recreating.

Recreating Safely Panel

Locations

On the Information Kiosks

Objectives

After interacting with this opportunity, visitors will:

- Be aware of the hazards related to plants and wildlife (bears and moose) associated with recreating in this area, and the low probability of encountering a problem, especially when practicing appropriate behaviors.
- Be aware how to avoid hazards.
- Be aware that thousands of people engage in recreational activities in this type of environment without experiencing any problems with native vegetation or wildlife.
- Be aware of the need for drinking water to avoid heat-related issues (because places to buy supplies are limited in the surrounding area).
- Feel comfortable engaging in recreational opportunities in the area.

Description and Concept

The key to a panel accomplishing the goals of encouraging visitors to engage in outdoor recreational activities, while at the same time educating them about how to do so safely, is a challenge. The area has

hazards, and they should not be minimized, but visitors should also not be frightened away from recreational opportunities.

The information can be presented in a variety of ways, but it is important to use visuals to depict key pieces of information, including depicting people behaving correctly, and what they should wear and take with them on the trails. The key hazards to focus on include those related to heat and dehydration, cold and related issues, and any biological hazards, such as bears and moose, and how to avoid negative encounters.

Note: *The ‘dos and don’ts’ approach, particularly without visuals, should be avoided because the information visitors need, such as how to behave when exploring the area, does not fit neatly into such categories.*

Note: *A ‘Recreating Safely’ Exhibit should also be located in the visitor facility.*

Strategies to Enhance Primary Arrival Experience

This is the visitor experience from the point where they are approaching the building to when they finish taking care of their needs for restrooms obtaining orientation, wayfinding and trip planning information, and planning their visit/trip. This includes passing by a Native Plant Garden with Interpretation, an obvious path to the bronze caribou and any accompanying interpretation, and all the strategies in the Information Wing of the building.

Native Plant Garden with Interpretation

Objectives

After interacting with this opportunity visitors will:

- Be impressed with the native Athabascans regarding how they used and continue to use plants to help support their lifestyle.
- Be aware that public land management agencies, including the FWS, the NPS, and the BLM, manage the flora as well as the fauna to help sustain a subsistence lifestyle.
- Be aware that the native flora is critical to conserving the native fauna.

Messages

The following are the messages to focus on in designing the exhibit, but that does not mean other messages and sub-messages cannot be included:

Primary Message 1: Public lands are critical to the lifestyle and quality of life of rural Alaskans.

Sub-Message 1-1: Public Lands, including the National Wildlife Refuge, National Parks and Preserve, Bureau of Land Management lands (and other DOI/DOA agency lands) support subsistence lifestyle practiced by Native Alaskans and residents.

Sub-Message 1-3: Public lands support the lifestyle of rural Alaskans in myriad ways.

Primary Message 2: Plants, fish and wildlife (including pollinators) depend on their specific habitat to survive, so people manage Public Lands to conserve those habitats.

Sub-Message 2-1: People conserve habitat to conserve native flora and fauna that depend on those habitats for survival.

Description and Concept

Plants selected for the Native Plant Garden should be ones that are used by native Athabascans and others practicing a subsistence lifestyle for materials, medicines or other uses, or they should be directly linked to native fauna of importance to subsistence lifestyle. Associated interpretation should focus on the role of the plant in directly or indirectly supporting subsistence lifestyles, and the role of public land managers in conserving these native plants.

Directional Signage (Interior)

Location

In Information Wing of the building in clear line-of-sight for people entering. (This will require a sign with a directional arrow and with information on both sides or two separate signs since people can enter from two different directions.)

Objectives

After interacting with this opportunity, visitors will:

- Know where the restrooms are located.
- Know where the Multipurpose Room is located.
- Be aware that the building contains an Exhibit Hall.

Description and Concept

One possible approach is to use a simple arrow suspended from the ceiling with an arrow pointing toward the destinations listed. Another approach is to mimic a street sign, using small rectangular panels with the location and an arrow arranged around a vertical structure like a pole. This sign system would include not only the destinations within the building, but also destinations like the border with Canada, the border between the US and the ALCAN, Eagle, Anchorage, Fairbanks, etc.

Information Desk

Location

In Information Wing of Visitor Center.

Objectives

After interacting with the opportunities in this area, at a minimum, visitors will:

- Have had most if not all their orientation and wayfinding questions answered, especially, "What is there to do here?"
- Be excited about exploring the nearby area, including Tok, the Fortymile country, Eagle, Chicken, etc.
- Have all the information they need for their desired experience (including a map).
- Know how to download and use the Audio Auto Tour Podcast (after it has been developed).

- Be aware that the TMSVC offers programs and stages events (and have a copy of the event and program schedule), and that they can receive information on upcoming events and programs via email if they supply their email address.

Note: *Whoever is at the Information Desk should have the ability to start videos in the Multipurpose Room.*

Description and Concept

The Information Desk provides visitors the opportunity to gather information from and ask questions of the staff. It is a critical part of the experience because some people prefer to get information personally. Information available at the Information Desk includes:

- Information on upcoming and regular events and programs.
- Suggested itineraries based on time required.
- An optional sign-in book that can be used to market events and programs (if people leave their email addresses).

The desk itself should have two spots for visitors to receive information – one designated for people with quick questions and one designated for people who want a more in-depth discussion on where to go and what to do.

Self-Serve Orientation Area

The Self-Serve Orientation Area allows visitors to get all the orientation and wayfinding information they need without having to go to the Information Desk. Availability of information in this area eases pressure on the Information Desk when the facility is crowded and serves visitors who prefer to gather information this way rather than engage in personal contact. All the information available at the Information Desk should be available here.

Location

In Information Wing of Visitor Center.

Objectives

After interacting with the opportunities in this area visitors will:

- Have had most if not all their orientation and wayfinding questions answered, especially, "What is there to do here?"
- Be excited about exploring the nearby area, including Tok, the Fortymile country, Eagle, Chicken, etc.
- Have all the information they need for their desired experience (including a map).
- Know how to download and use the Audio Auto Tour Podcast (after it has been developed).
- Be aware that the TMSVC offers presentations and stages events (and have a copy of the event and presentation schedule), and that they can receive information on upcoming events and programs via email if they supply their email address.

Description and Concept

To function effectively, visitors entering the facility must be able to quickly identify the type of information offered at this station. One possibility is to use a large title and visual element clearly visible from

the entryway, such as the question, "What is there to do here?" accompanied by a collage of people engaging in a variety of recreational opportunities in the area.

Information available in the self-serve orientation area includes:

- Maps of the area.
- Information on destinations along the local highway system, such as the Top of the World Highway Loop, etc.
- Information on upcoming and regular events and presentations.
- Suggested itineraries based on time required.
- An optional sign-in book that can be used to market events and presentations (if people leave their email addresses)

Mural: People of Tok Welcome You

Location

In Information Wing of the Visitor Center, behind the Information Desk. It should act as a visual barrier between the Exhibit Hall and Information Wing of the facility.

Objectives

After interacting with the opportunities in this area visitors will:

- Be aware that Tok is a multi-cultural community.
- Feel welcome.

Design Concept:

This is a mural consisting of images of people of different cultural backgrounds representing the people of Tok. It also includes the word 'Welcome' in multiple languages, including the 4 languages spoken by Athabascans living in the area.

Strategies to Enhance Visitor Center Interpretive Experience

The strategies to enhance the primary visitor interpretive experience in the Visitor Center are the exhibits in the Exhibit Hall and the videos in the Multipurpose Room. They focus on providing detailed message overview while motivating visitors to explore the area.

3-D Topographic Model

Note: *Topographic relief models are among the most popular exhibits for visitors, in part because it allows them to clearly visualize not only an area, but the topography of the area. This is of significant value when topography plays a key role in the story of an area as is the case in this area.*

Location

This should be the first exhibit visitors encounter after leaving the Information Wing.

Objectives

After interacting with this exhibit, visitors will:

- Have a good mental image of the region.
- Be confident in their location, the location of places they want to visit, and the general layout of the area.
- Be aware that the land is managed by different public and private entities, but that the majority of land is managed by federal public land management agencies.
- Be motivated to engage with the other exhibits in the Exhibit Hall.

Messages

The map does not communicate specific messages, other than that the topography is varied, but rather sets the stage for other exhibits. For example, understanding how much of the land is managed by public land management agencies gives weight to Primary Message 1: Public lands are critical to the life style and quality of life of rural Alaskans. It also depicts the stretch of lowland that is the Tetlin Passage, which helps visitors see why it would be a travel and migration corridor.

Design Concept

Circular or oblong shapes work better for topographic models of this kind than square or rectangular models because they are better at facilitating social interaction - a prime activity for visitors engaging in such an experience - and they do not have sharp corners as hazards. Touchable and durable models are also preferable.

The extent of the area shown on the topographic map will be determined during design development, but it should be limited to ensure that the major destinations within and immediately outside the region are large enough to be easily identifiable. It should include most of the loop that visitors take if they are driving the Top-of-the-World Highway through Tok and back to Dawson City. On the map, land jurisdiction should be identifiable, perhaps through use of different colors. This should include federal, state and tribal lands. Also, areas should be identified based on the different groups of Athabascans who lived and continue to live there.

Around the outside are images with brief amounts of text relating to the exhibits in the Exhibit Hall. The purpose is to motivate visitors to engage with those exhibits, so perhaps an image and a 'didjknow' would be appropriate.

The model can be simple, with touching different areas the only opportunity for interaction, or it can be more complex, such as by including a system where visitors can push buttons to obtain different information. To the extent possible, the 3-dimensional vertical relief should be maximized in the production to emphasize the mountains, ridges and river valleys of the area depicted.

Native Athabascans: We Thrive Here

Location: Along the south wall of the Exhibit Hall.

Objectives

After interacting with this opportunity, visitors will:

- Understand that the Visitor Center partners acknowledge these are the current and traditional homelands of Alaska Native people.
- Be impressed with the ability of the native Athabascans to survive and thrive in the harsh climate of east-central interior Alaska.
- Be impressed with the creativity, ingenuity and skill of the native Athabascans to use resources of the land to survive and thrive.
- Understand that adopting EuroAmerican tools, such as snow machines, does not mean abandoning their culture, but rather finding more efficient ways to support their cultural lifestyle.
- Know that the Athabascan culture is still thriving.

Messages

The following are the messages to focus on in designing the exhibit, but that does not mean other messages and sub-messages cannot be included:

Primary Message 6: Native Athabascan culture, which depends on the natural resources of the area, thrives in east-central interior Alaska.

Sub-Message 6-1: Our subsistence uses are still rooted in our practices of spiritual, ceremonial, and communal sharing.

Sub-Message 6-2: Our culture is still rooted in the natural world but is also contemporary.

Description and Concept

Note: *Development of this exhibit requires working with the native Athabascans. The following possible approaches were identified by native Athabascans during development of the plan but should be considered a starting point for discussions.*

One possible approach is to use a timeline as an organizer to depict the impact of EuroAmericans arriving in search of gold and the gradual integration of elements of EuroAmerican culture into the lifestyle of native Athabascans. Note that the point is not to indicate that the culture has been lost but rather

that the Athabascans chose to use certain technology to be more efficient in gathering food and maintaining a lifestyle that still depends on the natural resources of the land. With that in mind, much of the first part of the exhibit could focus on how the native Athabascans lived specific aspects of their life and how that changed with the introduction of EuroAmerican tools and ideas, such as guns and steel. The changing design of fish weirs, using actual artifacts, could be included along with information on the importance of whitefish because this area did not have salmon. The last part of the exhibit could focus on the shift from using sled dogs and pack dogs to using snow machines. A real snow machine, with a backdrop of snow-covered scenery, could be used as an opportunity for visitors to sit on the machine and get their picture taken.

One other aspect of the story that could be included is the adoption of elements of Athabascan culture by residents of Alaska, particularly those practicing a subsistence lifestyle.

Welcome to the Fortymile Country

Location

In the center of the floor in the west wing. This should be the first exhibit that visitors encounter as they move down the west wing from the topographic model.

Objectives

After interacting with this exhibit, visitors will:

- Understand that gold mining shaped the country as you see it now – physically and culturally.
- Be aware of and motivated to take advantage of the recreational opportunities in the area.
- Be motivated to take a trip to visit the Fortymile Country.
- Be aware that the BLM manages the Wild and Scenic River Corridor in the Fortymile Country, which is where mining in the area is concentrated, and that they manage with a multiple use concept that includes mining and that supports a subsistence lifestyle.

Messages

Primary Message 1: Public lands are critical to the life style and quality of life of rural Alaskans.

Sub-Message 1-1: Public Lands, including the National Wildlife Refuge, National Parks and Preserve, Bureau of Land Management lands (and other DOI/DOA agency lands) support subsistence lifestyle practiced by Native Alaskans and residents.

Sub-Message 1-3: Public lands support the lifestyle of rural Alaskans in myriad ways.

Sub-Message 1-4: Public lands provide a wide array of recreational opportunities, which contribute to the quality of life of residents, and which support the economy of the area through tourism.

Primary Message 3: Mining had and continues to have a significant impact on the cultural history of the area.

Sub-Message 3-1: Discovery of gold attracted the first EuroAmericans and led to increased use of existing transportation routes established by native Alaskans, greater connectivity to the outside world, establishment of towns and services and influx of more outsiders.

Sub-Message 3-2: Gold mining in this area shaped and continues to shape the lives of many residents here and in the rest of Alaska.

Sub-Message 3-3: Mining continues to play a key role in the economy of the area.

Primary Message 7: Living in ‘Real Alaska’ requires ingenuity, perseverance and grit, but it is not what you see on Reality Television.

Design Concept

This should function like a ‘gateway’ exhibit that provides a simple (primarily visual) introduction to the stories of the Fortymile country. It should note that the area was shaped and continues to be shaped by gold mining since the arrival of EuroAmericans, with a spotlight on the productivity of the Fortymile Country, including all the streams, for gold. In addition, it should clearly indicate that the Bureau of Land Management manages for multiple use (including mining) and that it has numerous recreational opportunities.

One possible approach is to use a timeline for the historical component of the exhibit as an organizer to illustrate the impact of the discovery of gold as a catalyst for the cultural shift of the area. It should clearly illustrate that the discovery of gold brought a sudden influx of EuroAmericans that had significant impact on the lifestyle of native Athabascans living in the area. The exhibit should highlight how the arrival of miners led to establishment of trading posts, towns, increased use of native transportation routes and other cultural attributes not seen before this time, and how those changes affected the lifestyle of the native Athabascans.

The other component of the exhibit should focus on what is there today – an area managed for multiple use, within which mining is still a major factor and that helps sustain a subsistence lifestyle through management by the BLM for native flora and fauna, but within which can be found a multitude of recreational opportunities. One possible approach is to use a stylized map of the area to highlight recreational opportunities, mining operations, Chicken, the Top of the World Highway, and the town of Eagle, with all of its cultural attractions. Note that this exhibit should answer the question, ‘Why is it called Fortymile Country?’

This exhibit should also have a component that introduces the concept of subsistence lifestyle and the importance of public lands in sustaining that lifestyle by conserving the flora and fauna on which that lifestyle depends. However, the major story on subsistence living is located in the exhibit focusing on the Tetlin NWR, so this does not need to be a major component.

Gold Mining

Location

In the west wing of the Exhibit Hall, in the center of the floor between the ‘Welcome to the Fortymile Country’ exhibit and the west wall.

Objectives

After interacting with this opportunity, visitors will:

- Understand the significant impact of gold mining on the cultural development of the region.
- Understand that they are responsible in part for the demand for gold.
- Know that gold mining is still significant in the Fortymile Country.
- Be able to name at least 3 ways gold is mined.

- Be motivated to visit the dredge in Chicken.
- Be more supportive of mining in general.

Messages

The following are the messages to focus on in designing the exhibit, but that does not mean other messages and sub-messages cannot be included:

Primary Message 1: Public lands are critical to the lifestyle and quality of life of rural Alaskans.

Sub-Message 1-3: Public lands support the lifestyle of rural Alaskans in myriad ways.

Sub-Message 1-5: Public lands support the local economy.

Primary Message 3: Mining had and continues to have a significant impact on the cultural history of the area.

Sub-Message 3-2: Gold mining in this area shaped and continues to shape the lives of many residents here and in the rest of Alaska.

Sub-Message 3-3: Mining continues to play a key role in the economy of the area.

Sub-Message 3-4: Mining in Alaska and elsewhere, not just gold mining, is important for creating a green economy and sustaining your quality of life.

Primary Message 4: Impacts of placer mining can be mitigated, and the land restored.

Description and Concept

As noted in the initial description, this exhibit has multiple purposes, including making people aware of the different strategies for mining gold, and how gold is necessary to our quality of life. One possible approach is to use a round exhibit with wedge-shaped interpretive components. The recommended components are as follows:

1. **Who Wants Gold? You do!**

This exhibit component focuses on the importance of gold in our society, beyond its use for jewelry. It should use common objects desired by many of visitors, such as cell phones, laptop computers, watches, etc. to illustrate the point. The key is to ensure that the person viewing the exhibit understands that they are among the vast majority of people who demand gold for the role it plays in their quality of life, other than for jewelry.

2. **Mining Gold the Old-Fashioned Way**

This component focuses on placer mining, including gold panning and using sluice boxes. It should include the basic concept that gold is heavier than other elements, which is why it works to sort it from other material using some type of system that involves allowing lighter material to be washed away, whether using a gold pan, sluice box or dredge. This sets the stage for understanding how dredges work and the process of hydraulic mining. The exhibit should include both historic images and modern-day images of prospectors panning for gold.

3. **Same Concept but on a Grand Scale**

This component focuses on the use of gold dredges, using the one at Chicken as an example. Building off the previous component, it should indicate how a dredge works to separate out gold from other material, and how it leaves tailings. This set the stage for understanding the need for and process of reclaiming streams. Note that the exhibit should make it clear that people can visit this gold dredge by going to Chicken.

4. Hydraulic Mining

This component focuses on the use of water to wash material from hillsides into a system to separate the gold. The first part should feature a cutaway of a hill combined with identification of geomorphologic events that occurred over time to create layers with gold, so people understand why gold is buried in the hills.

5. Reclaiming mined streams

This component focuses on how streams are reclaimed after mining, with a shout-out to the miners in the Fortymile Country who engage in reclamation, and to the BLM for their role in reclaiming mined streams in the area. One possible approach is to use a series of images (if available) of a stream before mining, the same stream after mining, the work involved in reclaiming the stream, and the same stream after reclamation. This last visual should show a cutaway of the stream, so people understand that fish return to reclaimed streambeds.

6. Going green requires mining

This component focuses on the importance of mining in the quest for a green economy. It should include the importance of mined materials in the creation of lithium batteries, electric cars, etc. It could also note that 23 of 39 critical minerals can be found in Alaska – the state just does not have the infrastructure yet to mine all those minerals.

The Need for Law and Order

Location: On the west wall of the Exhibit Hall.

Objectives

After interacting with this opportunity, visitors will:

- Understand why the US Army located a fort at Eagle.
- Be motivated to visit Fort Egbert and the historic district of Eagle.
- Understand the impact of the fort on the cultural activity and development of the area.
- Understand that native Alaskans were being abused by miners and other outsiders who came to Alaska and therefore would benefit from establishment of law and order.

Messages

The following are the messages to focus on in designing the exhibit, but that does not mean other messages and sub-messages cannot be included:

Primary Message 3: Mining had and continues to have a significant impact on the cultural history of the area.

Sub-Message 3-1: Discovery of gold attracted the first EuroAmericans and led to increased use of existing transportation routes established by native Alaskans, greater connectivity to the outside world, establishment of towns and services and influx of more outsiders.

Primary Message 5: Military importance of Alaska had and continues to have a significant impact on the cultural history and economy of the area.

Sub-Message 5-5: Establishment of Fort Egbert by the US Army led to a number of improvements in the area and consequent impacts on cultural development.

Description and Concept

The focus of this exhibit is on the status of Eagle as a focal point for law and order in the area, which requires a prelude to the story, so it is clear why law and order was needed. One possible concept is to use a timeline as an organizer to understand the sequence of events that shaped the town of Eagle today. It should begin with a focus on the fact that this area was used by native Athabascans (Han) for thousands of years before the arrival of EuroAmericans. It should include the impact of the Klondike Gold Rush, the subsequent need for establishing Fort Egbert and martial law to keep the peace, the arrival of Judge Wickersham in 1900, bringing another level of law and order, and the subsequent departure of many residents due to the discovery of gold in Nome and Fairbanks. The exhibit should finish with a focus on what is there today, highlighting features that visitors can still see in Eagle to increase the motivation for visiting.

Linking Eagle to the Rest of the World / Getting Around in Alaska

Location

On the north wall of the Exhibit Hall.

Objectives

After interacting with this opportunity, visitors will:

- Understand the impact of travel routes on cultural activity and development, and the Yukon River being a reason for the location of Eagle.
- Be impressed with the building of the telegraph connecting Eagle with the contiguous United States.
- Be impressed with the building of the Eagle Valdez Trail.
- Understand why dog teams were so important before snow machines.
- Be impressed with the ability of residents to get around in the state.
- Understand the reason for the location of native Athabascan settlements.
- Understand the importance of small planes for keeping Alaska connected.

Messages

The following are the messages to focus on in designing the exhibit, but that does not mean other messages and sub-messages cannot be included:

Primary Message 3: Mining had and continues to have a significant impact on the cultural history of the area.

Primary Message 5: Military importance of Alaska had and continues to have a significant impact on the cultural history and economy of the area.

Sub-Message 5-5: Establishment of Fort Egbert by the US Army led to a number of improvements in the area and consequent impacts on cultural development.

Primary Message 7: Living in 'Real Alaska' requires ingenuity, perseverance and grit, but it is not what you see on Reality Television.

Primary Message 8: Transportation routes are the key to cultural activity and development in this area and the rest of the world.

Description and Concept

This exhibit has the following components – Yukon River and boats, Eagle-to-Valdez Trail, telegraph, dog sleds and snow machines, highways and small planes. In addition to the information below, the focus of the change in linking Alaska to the rest of the world – whether by transportation routes or technology – should be on the impact on the people living there.

Yukon River – Lifeblood of the Region: This component, located on the far left of the wall as you face it (so it essentially connects to the exhibits about Eagle), focuses on the importance of the Yukon River as a travel corridor long before EuroAmericans arrived, but should include its role as a transportation route for gold miners, and the reason for the siting of the town of Eagle. One possible approach is to use a map of the Yukon drainage depicting the location of native Athabascan settlements in Alaska and Canada, along with the movement of trade goods up and down the Yukon. The story of the arrival of Lt. Henry Allen in the area being celebrated by natives firing guns should be included as an example of the role of trade routes – in this case the Yukon River – in the spreading of culture. An inset map of Alaska, depicting the major rivers and coastline and major population areas, could be used to emphasize the importance of water travel in cultural activity and development.

Eagle-to-Valdez Trail: This component, located adjacent to the component on the Yukon River, focuses on the impetus for and the impact of the completion of the trail on cultural activity in Eagle and along the route. One possible approach is to contrast life before and after completion of the trail using case histories, sketches, etc. It should also help substantiate the importance of residents having sled dog teams, the next component of this exhibit.

Dogs – essential to life: This component focuses on the importance of dogs for sleds or packs as a means of traveling to connect with other communities, hunt for game, and generally survive in this area before there were snow machines or roads. This ties to the impact of the Eagle-to-Valdez Trail, the telegraph, and eventually, the building of the ALCAN. The latter part of the exhibit could focus on the impact of snow machines, without duplicating the information on snow machines located in the Athabascan exhibit.

Telegraph: As with the other components, this element should focus on the impetus for building the telegraph and the impact of having connection with the outside world. One possible approach is to contrast the amount of time to get information to and from the outside world before the telegraph and after. (This could also be a part of the component on the Eagle-Valdez Trail to help underscore the impact of advances in access and the resulting impact.) The story of Amundsen sending a telegram about successfully navigating the Northwest Passage should be a part of this story.

Highway: This is a teaser because the main exhibit on the ALCAN is located elsewhere. One possible approach is to show the highway to Eagle and simply ask the question, “What impact on cultural activity and lifestyle do you think building highways had?” It should then suggest that visitors check out the exhibit on the Tetlin Passage to find the answer regarding the building of the ALCAN. This exhibit should include an inset depicting the highway system in Alaska and the concentrations of population, with the point being for people to ask themselves how people got to remote areas that

did not have road access. This should lead into the next component of the exhibit, which focuses on the importance of air travel.

Small planes: This component focuses on the importance of small planes as a means to connect remote communities with the outside world. One possible approach is to use a map of Alaska depicting the location of communities, the location of roads, and the number of airstrips to underscore the importance of air travel to provide connections. If possible, a scale model (1:4) of a Super Cub could be hung from the ceiling. The plane could be equipped with tundra tires to emphasize the issues with landing at a variety of less-improved airstrips. Associated images and information would show how they can land on tundra, thus increasing the number of places they can access.

Tetlin Passage Over Time

Location: Along the East Wall of the Exhibit Hall.

Objectives

After interacting with this opportunity, visitors will:

- Understand the importance of the Tetlin Passage as a travel and migration route since the Ice Age.
- Be aware that the Tetlin Passage was a key route for migration of people who crossed the Bering Land Bridge to eventually arrive in the rest of North and South America.
- Understand the role of the Tetlin Passage and the public lands in providing a pathway for migrating waterfowl and other birds.
- Understand the role of the Tetlin Passage in terms of native Athabascan settlements and activity.
- Be aware of the role of African Americans in building the ALCAN and their consequent contributions to the quality of life in and the security of the United States.
- Understand the impact on cultural activity and development due to the building of the ALCAN.

Messages

The following are the messages to focus on in designing the exhibit, but that does not mean other messages and sub-messages cannot be included:

Primary Message 2: Plants, fish and wildlife (including pollinators) depend on their specific habitat to survive, so people manage Public Lands to conserve those habitats.

Primary Message 8: Transportation routes are the key to cultural activity and development in this area and the rest of the world.

Description and Concept

Concept: This exhibit has the following components:

1. **Migration by the native Athabascans after the Ice Age to populate areas to the south.** This can be established in part by looking at languages that are derived from Athabascan (such as Apache

and Navajo) and identifying tribes of indigenous people in North American with Athabascan heritage. This can be depicted using a map showing the presumed route and highlighting the locations with Athabascan heritage.

2. **Impact of the building of the ALCAN during World War II and subsequent use for military purposes and then public travel.** Roadhouses can be included in this exhibit. This should include a map showing the extent of the ALCAN built at that time, historic images of it being built, historic images of roadhouses along with images of people traveling the highway, and an image of its use today.
3. **Use of the Tetlin Passage by migratory waterfowl and other birds.** This includes species like the trumpeter swan.

One possible approach is to use the right side of the exhibit to focus on native Athabascans traveling down the corridor, with insets focusing on the Bering Land Bridge and the resulting transfer of elements of Athabascan culture to the rest of North and South America, and the left side to depict the building of the ALCAN, with a specific component focusing on why it was built, and another component focusing on the impact of the construction of the highway on cultural activity and development in the area, especially in terms of the development of Tok. An inset should focus on the key role of African Americans in building the highway. The center part of the exhibit would focus on the role of the Tetlin Passage as a migratory bird route. This should include some taxidermy models of migrating birds hanging overhead. An element of this section should pose the question, 'What will come this way in the future?' The answer would focus on the impact of global climate change on the ranges of species (species adapted to more southern climates gradually moving north) and the possible impact on the flora and fauna of the area, and consequently, on the lifestyle of those who live here.

Tetlin NWR- Conserving the Flora, Fauna and a Way of Life

Location

In the northeast corner of the north wing. (This requires removing the storage space.)

Objectives

After interacting with this opportunity, visitors will:

- Understand the role of the wildlife refuge in supporting a subsistence lifestyle.
- Understand the threat imposed by invasives.
- Act to avoid being a carrier of invasives into the area.
- Appreciate the FWS for its efforts to conserve native flora and fauna.
- Understand the importance of a refuge system that includes nesting, resting and wintering habitat for migratory birds.
- Understand the role of natural wildfire in sustaining the native flora and fauna of the area.
- Understand that Tetlin NWR is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. At over 565 National Wildlife Refuges in America, it is the largest system of lands in the world dedicated to the protection and conservation of wildlife and their habitat.

Messages

The following are the messages to focus on in designing the exhibit, but that does not mean other messages and sub-messages cannot be included:

Primary Message 1: Public lands are critical to the life style and quality of life of rural Alaskans.

Sub-Message 1-1: Public Lands, including the National Wildlife Refuge, National Parks and Preserve, Bureau of Land Management lands (and other DOI/DOA agency lands) support subsistence lifestyle practiced by Native Alaskans and residents.

Sub-Message 1-2: Public lands support the cultural heritage of the native people of Alaska.

Sub-Message 1-3: Public lands support the lifestyle of rural Alaskans in myriad ways.

Sub-Message 1-5: Public lands support the local economy.

Primary Message 2: Plants, fish and wildlife (including pollinators) depend on their specific habitat to survive, so people manage Public Lands to conserve those habitats.

Sub-Message 2-1: People conserve habitat to conserve native flora and fauna that depend on those habitats for survival.

Sub-Message 2-2: Invasives, which are often brought in by visitors, threaten native flora, fauna and drinking water on which rural Alaskan lifestyle depends.

Sub-theme 2-3: Every part of an ecosystem, including the forces that shaped and continue to shape it (such as naturally occurring wildfire), play an important role in nutrient cycling, which is a key to the health of that ecosystem and the subsequent conservation of healthy populations of fish and wildlife.

Description and Concept

One possible approach is to build a diorama featuring the lower elevation habitats found in the boreal forest that occur on the refuge, complete with taxidermy fauna that inhabit these ecosystems (including an interior grizzly bear).

Reveals include a series focusing on the impact of invasives, which could include images contrasting what an area looks like without invasives and what it would look like if invasives took hold. The supporting information should focus on impact on other flora and fauna, but ultimately on people who depend on the resources of the refuge for their lifestyle. This could cause more impact if the examples of invasives showed a significant impact on species that humans value, such as using choke cherries because they poison moose. It could also include an image of a dog on the outside of a reveal with the question, 'How can a dog help?' With the answer focused on the use of dogs that can sniff out invasives. This could also include a reveal with the question, 'How did they get here?' The answer could show a car bumper with a weed hanging from it, and/or a boat with invasives on the hull. Information would focus on the fact that most invasives are brought in by travelers, along with what travelers can do to avoid bringing invasives in.

Another set of reveals focus on the role of naturally occurring wildfire. As with invasives, it could include ones with images contrasting what an area would look like without fire and what it would look like with fire, with an emphasis on species that thrive in different stages of ecological development after a burn, especially ones that humans value, such as moose.

Finally, the reveals should provide insight into what lives in the refuge and how that wildlife is important to the quality of life of residents and visitors, and how it supports the local economy. One possible approach is to include the following types of reveals:

'Didjacksons'

A fun fact.

'What if?,' Why?, and 'Why not?'

These are questions posed on the outside of a door or other type of reveal, such as "What will happen if natural wildfires are extinguished?" The answer is on the inside. The answer should be visual, if possible, but if text is required, it should be brief.

Who lives here?

These questions are posed on the outside of a door that is located on an image associated with fish, birds, or wildlife, such as a woodpecker hole, bear scat, and cone scales. The identity of the organism is revealed upon opening the door, along with a tidbit of information about that particular piece of evidence.

What is the value?

These focus on the value of a particular species. The array of reveals should include ones that focus on value to tourism (and therefore the economy), ones that focus on value to those practicing a subsistence lifestyle, and ones focusing on value to a naturally functioning ecosystem.

The National Parks and Preserve

Objectives

After interacting with this opportunity, visitors will:

- Understand that the National Parks and Preserve are managed differently, although both support a subsistence lifestyle.
- Appreciate the NPS for its efforts to conserve native flora and fauna.
- Understand the importance of being able to manage relatively intact ecosystems.
- Appreciate the efforts of the NPS to also conserve cultural history.

Messages

The following are the messages to focus on in designing the exhibit, but that does not mean other messages and sub-messages cannot be included:

Primary Message 1: Public lands are critical to the life style and quality of life of rural Alaskans.

Sub-Message 1-1: Public Lands, including the National Wildlife Refuge, National Parks and Preserve, Bureau of Land Management lands (and other DOI/DOA agency lands) support subsistence lifestyle practiced by Native Alaskans and residents.

Sub-Message 1-2: Public lands support the cultural heritage of the native people of Alaska.

Sub-Message 1-3: Public lands support the lifestyle of rural Alaskans in myriad ways.

Sub-Message 1-5: Public lands support the local economy.

Primary Message 2: Plants, fish and wildlife (including pollinators) depend on their specific habitat to survive, so people manage Public Lands to conserve those habitats.

Sub-Message 2-1: People conserve habitat to conserve native flora and fauna that depend on those habitats for survival.

Sub-Message 2-2: Invasives, which are often brought in by visitors, threaten native flora, fauna and drinking water on which rural Alaskan lifestyle depends.

Sub-theme 2-3: Every part of an ecosystem, including the forces that shaped and continue to shape it (such as naturally occurring wildfire), play an important role in nutrient cycling, which is a key to the health of that ecosystem and the subsequent conservation of healthy populations of fish and wildlife.

Description and Concept

One approach is to use a diorama as a basic setting, similar to that used for the exhibit on the Tetlin NWR. However, this diorama would focus on high elevation (alpine) habitats instead of lowland habitats. The interactive components would be similar but focusing more on what lives there and why the species is important. It should also include an element focusing on the interconnections between uplands and lowlands, and the importance of maintaining healthy uplands to help maintain healthy lowlands. One way to visually display the connection is to link the two dioramas with an element over the doorway into the Multipurpose Room. A Dall sheep would be located high in the diorama to help create an attractive visual.

Note: *Because this is an ecosystem that is hard for visitor to see, directions should be included to guide visitors to places they can experience this type of environment, such as up the Taylor and Steese Highways.*

Guided Tours: Fortymile Country

Objectives

After interacting with this opportunity, visitors will:

- Understand that gold mining was and still is an important activity in the area.
- Be more supportive of gold mining.
- Be impressed with the residents who live in the area and mine for gold.
- Be impressed with restoration efforts of mined stream beds.
- Be excited about having panned for gold.
- Want to return and engage in recreational opportunities in the area.
- Have had the opportunity to pan for gold.

Messages

The following are the messages to focus on in designing the exhibit, but that does not mean other messages and sub-messages cannot be included:

Primary Message 1: Public lands are critical to the life style and quality of life of rural Alaskans.

Sub-Message 1-1: Public Lands, including the National Wildlife Refuge, National Parks and Preserve, Bureau of Land Management lands (and other DOI/DOA agency lands) support subsistence lifestyle practiced by Native Alaskans and residents.

Sub-Message 1-3: Public lands support the lifestyle of rural Alaskans in myriad ways.

Sub-Message 1-4: Public lands provide a wide array of recreational opportunities, which contribute to the quality of life of residents, and which support the economy of the area through tourism.

Sub-Message 1-5: Public lands support the local economy.

Primary Message 3: Mining had and continues to have a significant impact on the cultural history of the area.

Sub-Message 3-1: Discovery of gold attracted the first EuroAmericans and led to increased use of existing transportation routes established by native Alaskans, greater connectivity to the outside world, establishment of towns and services and influx of more outsiders.

Sub-Message 3-2: Gold mining in this area shaped and continues to shape the lives of many residents here and in the rest of Alaska.

Sub-Message 3-3: Mining continues to play a key role in the economy of the area.

Primary Message 4: Impacts of placer mining can be mitigated, and the land restored.

Primary Message 7: Living in 'Real Alaska' requires ingenuity, perseverance and grit, but it is not what you see on Reality Television.

Description and Concept

This is a guided tour that begins at the Visitor Center and involves taking visitors into the Fortymile Country as far as Chicken. They will stop at viewpoints, mining operations, restored streambeds, streambeds in the process of being restored and the dredge at Chicken. They will also try their hand at panning for gold. The guide will provide the interpretation, focusing on the messaging identified for this experience.

Action Plan

An Action Plan is a sequential list of actions to take to develop a complete information network to support visitor experiences in the Project Area. It includes a Priority for Implementation that focuses on implementing strategies identified in the VIEP, but also any additional actions necessary to facilitate such implementation.

The following actions assume that the following strategies identified in the VIEP have already been addressed by funding from the FWS.

- All interpretive opportunities identified for the Exhibit Hall
- All elements identified for the Information Wing
- The Area Orientation Panels, bronze caribou sculpture and ‘beacons’ identified for the exterior of the Visitor Center

They also assume that the recommended upgrades the parking area are already a top priority in addition to the information and interpretive opportunities for and modifications to the Visitor Center. Consequently, this section focuses on potential information and interpretive opportunities offered before visitors arrive and after they leave the Visitor Center. Note that it is the interpretive opportunities that build on what the Visitor Center presents that have the greatest potential to significantly increase the holding power due to interpretation.

High Priority

1. Update website information on APLIC site. Websites function effectively in the ‘Trip Planning’ stage of a visitor experience, so it is critical to ensure that information a visitor needs to plan a trip to the area is complete. This includes what to wear, what to bring, what to expect, recreational and interpretive opportunities (so they plan to spend more time in the area), when to come, etc. Websites also function effectively in the ‘Post Trip’ stage of the experience if they offer detail on stories that are presented in the Visitor Center. For that reason, it should include a reading list specific to the Eastern Interior plus videos associated with the stories.
2. Update information the Tetlin NWR website to the extent possible to reflect the changes in the information and interpretive network.
3. Modify information offered in the Tetlin NWR Visitor Center so it is consistent with and complements what is in the TMSVC. For example, it should ensure that visitors know that Tok has no public restrooms other than those at TMSVC, and those restrooms are not accessible when the building is closed. That way, visitors know not to expect access to restrooms if they arrive at the TMSVC when it is not open. As another example, the Visitor Center should offer ‘teasers’ associated with interpretive opportunities in the TMSVC to help motivate travelers to stop.
4. Work with partners to re-develop the Audio Auto Tour between Tok and Beaver Creek Crossing to mesh with and take advantage of what is offered in the TMSVC. This should be in podcast form.
5. Work with partners to develop an Audio Auto Tour on the Taylor Highway (also in podcast form), at least to Eagle, to build on the stories presented in the TMSVC. Note that the purpose of the TMSVC in regard to interpretation is not to cover a story, but to ‘uncover’ one – spark an interest on the part of the visitor. To take advantage of that, the interpretive network needs to include opportunities to explore such stories further after visitors leave. They can do so by taking in the interpretive opportunities in Eagle, but those opportunities are likely to be used more if an Auto Tour exists between Tok and Eagle, so visitors have another reason to take that route.

Medium Priority

1. Develop ranger-guided walks and talks multiple days a week that are advertised locally and online. Possibilities include:
 - Gold panning (with emphasis on communicating the key messages associated with gold)
 - Berry picking
 - Plant identification (with interpretive information on the value of different plants to the native culture and to subsistence lifestyle)
 - Boreal forest succession (with emphasis on the different species that are supported by different stages in succession)
 - Bear awareness course
2. Develop Audio Auto Tours (podcasts) for the Tok Cutoff and the highway connecting Tok to Fairbanks. The Auto Tour for the Tok Cutoff should include an option for an Auto Tour that encompasses the road into Wrangell-St. Elias NP and Preserve.
3. Develop short videos showing what travelers can expect in the Upper Tanana that can be presented in the Multipurpose Room and shared on YouTube. Possibilities include:
 - Trip planning information, including road conditions, campgrounds, services available, what not to do in Alaska, bear awareness, leave-no-trace practices, etc.
 - Sites to see, including Tok APLIC and other VCs, and good natural views and potential for wildlife viewing.
 - What to watch out for, especially when traveling to the area.
 - Bear awareness and Leave-no-trace practices.
 - What not to do in Alaska as a visitor.

Low Priority

Note: *You Tube videos are likely to be viewed by a higher percentage of the target audiences than listening to podcasts other than those specifically tied to auto tours. That is why the You Tube videos are a higher priority than general podcasts.*

1. Develop podcasts on topics associated with what is presented in the Visitor Center. These should be available for use in the Multipurpose Room, and also for people to listen to them prior to, during or after their trip. Possible podcasts include the following:
 - **Athabaskan history past to present:** Possible elements for inclusion and design approaches:
 - Stories on how this area was inhabited during the last glacial period and how that can be seen on the landscape today with the sand dunes and wide valleys
 - The distinction of Athabaskan from other indigenous groups should be made, and then distinguish Upper Tanana from other groups include the Tanacross, Han, and Ahtna groups
 - Place names in local languages should be used
 - The continuity of cultural practices should be emphasized
 - The importance of subsistence and how that is reflected into management laws should be included
 - **Wildfire on the landscape: a part of the way of life:** Possible elements for inclusion:
 - How people and animals benefit from boreal forest succession
 - Where visitors can see stages of wildfire succession

- **Caribou migrations.** Possible elements for inclusion:
 - Places they migrate to and from, and where they are at different times of the year
 - Why they migrate
 - How caribou are used by people and the importance to the ecology of the area
 - Information on how they are managed past and present
- **There's gold in them rivers: A history of the Upper Yukon gold rushes that reach into today.** Possible elements for inclusion:
 - Jack London
 - Historical narratives that include miners, traders, trappers, and the law
 - Narratives explaining how and where people traveled and lived at the time
 - Narratives explaining how people mined over the last 150 years
- **Tetlin Passage: Land of Great Migrations:** Possible elements for inclusion:
 - Stories about the various people and animals that use this route for seasonal migrations
 - When migrations occur and why
 - Why do caribou come to wetlands during the winter and stay in the treeless alpine in the summer?
 - How long do swans have to raise a cygnet?
 - When do the roads make RV travel difficult
 - How do people and animals continue to get around this place during the winter
- **Alaska Before the War:** Possible elements for inclusion:
 - History of Alaska from purchase to WWII
 - Development of roads, mining, and fishing
 - What was going on in the Upper Tanana/Fortymile in those decades
 - Chisana Gold Rush
 - Nabesna Mine
 - Boom and bust in the Fortymile
 - Native people interaction with EuroAmericans
 - Trading posts and churches established
 - Slow involvement by federal government, growing interest in statehood
- **Building of the Alaska Highway:** Possible elements for inclusion:
 - Narratives from the construction of the Alaska Highway
 - Who built it and why
 - What challenges did they face and how are some of those challenges still here
 - How the Alaska Highway changed the state forever, especially the Eastern Interior
 - How Native people were impacted by its construction
- **Geology of the Region:** Possible elements for inclusion:
 - Audio tour that explains the geological history of each major section of highway, including:
 - Nabesna Road
 - Tok Cutoff
 - Alaska Highway Canada to Tok
 - Taylor Highway

Appendix A: Priority Audience Profiles

Introduction

Information - including interpretation - is a commodity; people buy it with their time, their most valued personal resource, along with attention and cognitive effort. They also incur opportunity cost – if they spend time reading a sign or walking an interpretive trail, they lose the opportunity to spend that time doing anything else. Since different people "buy" different interpretive experiences, it is important to identify the key priority audiences, and then build profiles of those audiences to determine the type of interpretive experiences they are *willing* to "buy" with their time, and the level at which the information must be presented so they are *able* to process it based on their knowledge and background.

In general, experiences that visitors are willing to buy can be described as ones that:

- Meet their **needs**.
- Meet their **expectations**.
- Are within their **limitations** of time, money, energy, and other such personal resources.
- Are **opportunities** that compete successfully with other options for spending time, usually through association with interests that were the primary reason for visiting.

Needs include such basic amenities as food, shelter, and restrooms. The key information-related needs are trip planning, orientation, and wayfinding. Interpretation is an option. Consequently, trip planning, orientation and wayfinding must be addressed at the beginning of and throughout the visitor experience.

Expectations are more variable because they are created by previous experience, what people hear and what they read. In the case of Tok and Eastern Interior AK, expectations are likely to vary significantly due to the lack of experience of many people with the area and the presence of Reality TV shows that portray 'AK' inaccurately.

Limitations are factors that prevent someone from engaging in an experience or interpretive opportunity, such as not knowing the language in which it is presented, or not being able to access a site if in a wheelchair, and factors that tend to offset the reward for engaging in an experience and can therefore cause a potential user to bypass an opportunity. For example, visitors are often on vacation and do not want to 'work'—either physically or mentally—at their recreation unless the personal benefit is worth the time and effort required, and do not want to waste time. That is one reason that interpretive opportunities with a lot of text do not work well. Reading requires more time and effort than looking at images. Limitations can be related to physical ability, language, education level and other characteristics.

Opportunities that can successfully compete for a person's time typically relate to a visitor's interests. Those interests often exist prior to arrival, such as is the case with visitors wanting to see the 'real Alaska,' or they can be generated by activities on-site, such as by what they see or hear in the Tok Main Street Visitor Center or on a guided tour. On-site features are of key importance because they represent one of the best opportunities to capture the interest of a visitor and begin the communication process.

Key Priority Audiences

The focus of the audience analysis in Visitor Interpretive Experience Planning is to first determine the priority audiences and then profile those audiences to determine what type of *experiences* would motivate them to spend time at the Refuge. Once that is accomplished, interpretive opportunities can be identified that add value to those experiences, according to the visitor's definition of 'value,' and that the priority audience is willing to engage with and able to understand.

The experiences visitors desire do not typically depend on interpretation. Restrooms, drinking water and a good wayfinding system are key components of a good visitor experience. That is not to say that interpretation does not add value – it is just that it is an optional part of a visitor experience.

Priority audiences are ones that potentially have the greatest impact on achieving Overall Goals. Based on the goals and objectives associated with this project, review of existing information and discussions with FWS personnel and stakeholders the primary priority audiences include the following:

- Travelers coming to and through Tok and the surrounding area.
- Activity-oriented visitors (residents and non-residents). This includes birdwatchers, hunters, anglers, and others for who their chosen activity is the highest priority for spending their time. Although they may view interpretive opportunities as lower priority, and therefore may not be as willing to engage, they still need trip planning, orientation, and wayfinding information to have the experience they desire. Most activity-oriented visitors also have time during which they cannot engage in their priority experience and would therefore be more amenable to interpretive opportunities.

Within each of those groups are the more typical audience segments – families, elderly, those with physical limitations, groups of friends (of any age), etc. The following section contains audience characteristics and implications.

Priority Audience Profiles

Introduction

Audience Profiles consist of characteristics of an audience and implications of those characteristics that affect the audience's willingness and ability to access and process information. As a simple example, children are short (characteristic). The key implication is that information opportunities directed at children need to be at a lower height. The goal of the profiles is to ensure that the Interpretive Program serves all priority audiences.

The following are characteristics of priority audiences that will be taken into consideration in developing an Interpretive Program. The initial section contains characteristics shared by multiple audiences (Universal Characteristics). That is followed by a section containing characteristics of specific priority audiences. Note that some audiences can be found in multiple places. For example, visitors can be activity-oriented visitors (hunters, anglers, cyclists, etc.) and can also be aging, families, etc.

Universal Characteristics

Regardless of the priority audience, it must be assumed that all preferred learning styles and all physical impairments will be represented. It also must be assumed that children will be a part of any audience as will the elderly. Consequently, the following characteristics must be considered when choosing and developing visitor interpretive experiences.

All Visitors

The following characteristics and limitations apply to most situations and audiences.

Key Characteristics

- All visitors will expect anyone associated with the Visitor Center to answer questions regarding basic cultural and natural history of the area.
- Most visitors will expect to see wildlife (Alaska is known for wildlife), specifically large mammals, such as moose and bear.
- Visitors will expect orientation information to interpretive and recreational opportunities in the surrounding area ("What is there to do around here?"), especially opportunities with a similar focus ("Where else can I see wildlife, history, etc.?").
- A significant percentage of visitors can be reached using social media such as Instagram, Twitter, Blogs and Facebook.
- A significant percentage of visitors are comfortable with and often prefer using new technologies, such as vodcasts, podcasts and GPS-based tour programs. Note that older people are less likely to prefer using new technologies.
- Many travelers plan part of their trip, including general itinerary, prior to arriving. Many will use the internet to access information to plan.
- People tend to visit in groups, typically family or friends. Families and other similar groups have a variety of educational levels within the group.
- Any given Priority Audience will have a variety of impairments represented.
- Users will have varying limitations in terms of energy, time, and interests.
- Users will have varying degrees of educational background.

- A key component of the experience that most groups desire, especially families, is a social experience.
- Urban dwellers may not have much experience in areas dominated by nature and may be uncomfortable recreating in the area.
- Virtually all visitors will be in a vehicle, and therefore able to drive.

Implications

The following are key implications of these characteristics:

- Managing expectations will be important to avoid disappointment on the part of the visitor and to have them spend as much time as possible exploring the surrounding area. This involves providing a more accurate, but welcoming view of this part of Alaska prior to a visitor arriving. Such information should be available on the Internet, in Milepost and through other sources of information commonly used by visitors.
- All staff need to be able to answer basic orientation and wayfinding questions and direct visitors to locations where they can obtain additional information. This includes being able to direct visitors to locations where they have the best chance of seeing wildlife, seeing the 'real Alaska,' etc.
- New media should be used as part of the information delivery network when appropriate to the audience and situation. (This does not mean that it should be used extensively in the TMSVC, but rather within the entire Interpretive/Information Network.)
- Trip planning, orientation and wayfinding information is a priority and should be easily accessible both at the Visitor Center and at key locations in the area.
- Interpretive opportunities such as signs and exhibits should be designed to accommodate at least small groups and should be designed to be a part of a social conversation rather than trying to force visitors to give maximum attention to those interpretive opportunities.
- The Interpretive Program should provide opportunities that allow all members of a family or group to be involved at the same time and place, despite having different educational or experiential backgrounds. This can be accomplished by providing several opportunities in one location, each catering to a different educational level, or a single strategy that is designed in such a way that everyone in the group has an intellectual entry point into that exhibit.
- Parts of the Interpretive Network in the Visitor Center should be able to be easily changed to take advantage of seasonal changes in audiences.
- The Interpretive Program must offer opportunities that are understandable to audiences with limited expertise and knowledge regarding nature and natural processes, and Alaska.
- To the extent possible, the Interpretive Program should present information in a way that is rewarding, within a visitor's desires for a 'leisure' activity.
- To the extent possible, the Interpretive Program should offer opportunities to "skim," "browse," or "gorge" the information to accommodate preferences and to accommodate visitors on a tight schedule.
- The Interpretive Program should provide an 'opportunity menu' that lists time required for each activity and suggest itineraries based on time available. For example, it should suggest an itinerary for the visitor that has a half-hour, 2 hours, and a half-day.
- For urban residents who may find areas dominated by nature to be uncomfortable, a gradual continuum of experiences – from the outside of nature looking in progressing to the inside of nature looking out – is important.
- The Interpretive Program should offer opportunities that will help counter disappointment at not seeing wildlife, such as by teaching people how to identify evidence of wildlife.

- Virtually all visitors will be able to drive to Chicken, Eagle, and other sites in the area because they will have a vehicle. This has implications for the form of wayfinding and interpretive information – some of it must be easy to use while traveling in a vehicle.

Inbound travelers from Canada (Beaver Creek Crossing)

Most of these travelers are either from Canada or traveling to Alaska from the lower 48 on the Alaska Highway.

Characteristic: They have driven through a lot of compelling natural scenery.

Implication: Spectacular scenery is not necessarily going to have as much attraction power for this audience.

Characteristic: They will have vehicles.

Implication: They will be able to explore the surrounding area.

Characteristic: They are independent travelers – not attached to a tour.

Implication: Although they may have developed an itinerary before coming, they are likely to have some flexibility and could make the decision to stay longer.

Characteristic: Many are retired.

Implication: They are more likely to have flexibility to stay longer.

Characteristic: Most are on their first visit to Alaska.

Implication: Their 'image' of Alaska and life in Alaska is likely to be inaccurate, especially if they have been exposed to Reality TV shows featuring life in the Alaskan Bush. They are not likely to understand subsistence lifestyles, and may believe indigenous peoples to no longer exist, at least not in large numbers.

Characteristic: Travelers are going to be older. (In recent studies, the average age was around 54 years, with the biggest segments 55-64 and 65+.)

Implications: They may be starting to have issues with vision, hearing and balance.

Characteristic: Travelers will likely be reasonably well off.

Implication: They will be able to afford crafts, purchase meals and engage in relatively expensive visitor opportunities, such as tours on a small plane.

Characteristic: They are likely passing through Tok on their way someplace else, such as Denali, Kenai or other points west.

Implication: Attraction power for staying in the Tok area at least a day must be high to compete successfully for more of this visitor's time.

Note: *Although an experience at the Visitor Center can increase the Attraction Power of Tok to some degree, it will not – in itself – be enough to cause people to stay another night. Additional visitor opportunities in the immediate area will probably be necessary.*

Characteristic: They are likely to be interested in Alaska History, Athabascans and natural history of the area.

Implication: These are good focal points for exhibits and for motivating them to visit places associated with these topics.

Characteristic: Those coming in from Canada will likely have stopped at the USFWS Visitor Center along the route.

Implication: They may have already experienced interpretation focusing on the subjects covered in that facility, notably, the Athabaskan culture.

Residents

Key Characteristics: In addition to the characteristics noted for all audiences, the following are key characteristics of residents in general, and the implications of those characteristics.

Residents are often relegated (because of work commitments) to specific times when they could participate in interpretive opportunities, such as in the evening and during weekends.

Residents are typically present year-round.

Residents have a higher potential to be repeat visitors.

- Residents often prefer more in-depth material if about the area, and/or can handle more in-depth material because of familiarity with an area and local issues.

Residents are often interested in local issues because of direct impact on their lifestyle.

Implications: The following are key implications of these characteristics:

- Serving residents effectively may require programs specifically designed for this audience or a segment of this audience and scheduled at times they can attend. (Anything that makes it easier to engage in such opportunities without having to compete with tourists is likely to be more effective.)
- New material and programs need to be developed continuously to take advantage of the opportunity for repeat visitation from this group and to address issues that come up.

Families

Note: *In this case families are assumed to have young children.*

Characteristic: Families are made up individuals of many ages.

Implications: There is a need for a variety of interpretive strategies to address numerous learning styles and education levels. Experiences need to be close to restroom facilities.

Characteristic: Families often have strict time limits based on the needs of various members.

Implication: Experiences need to be offered at convenient times and flexible to accommodate family needs.

Characteristic: Families have a need for a sense of safety and security.

Implications

- Facilities need to be well-maintained, accessible, and secure.
- Guidelines for safety need to be well-communicated.
- Exploring the surrounding area is likely to be contingent on an effective orientation and wayfinding network because it helps make parents feel safe.

Characteristic: Parents like to facilitate good educational and enjoyable experiences for their children.

Implications: Experiences that allow a parent to play the role of a facilitator of their children's experience are likely to be effective.

Children

Reaching children is not about dumbing down the information presented. It is about offering experiences that help build emotional, physical, and intellectual connections to the extent possible, which ideally lay groundwork for understanding key concepts when they are older. Key characteristics include ones relating to their physical limitations and assets, and one relating to mental limitations.

Characteristics – Physical: Children are short. They also often have an abundance of energy.

Implications: Viewing opportunities and material addressed to children needs to be at a comfortable height. In addition, interpretation-related opportunities that involve expending energy should be identified and developed as a part of the Interpretive Network if possible (this may not be possible within the Visitor Center experience).

Characteristics – Mental: Children are a challenge because they learn differently than adults. Whereas adults can learn by processing incoming verbal information based on previous experience and existing knowledge, children up to around the age of 8 do not have a vast storehouse of previous experiences

and knowledge. Consequently, they are primarily focused on acquiring information firsthand. Since they have not completely mastered language, they use their primary information-gathering tools – their senses – to explore their environment.

Implications: Opportunities to touch, smell, taste, see and hear are critical to an effective experience for children. This is an important point because we often focus on the need for activities to be interactive and believe we have accomplished our goal if they can push buttons. Although the opportunity to interact in such a way increases the attraction power of an opportunity, if it is not an opportunity to discover information using senses, it is not as effective for children in terms of gathering and processing information.

People with Disabilities

The intent of the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provisions is to promote equal access to the built environment, and to information, for those with impairments. Following Universal Design for Learning Guidelines, which focus on creating experiences that can be enjoyed by everyone, including those with impairments, involves integrating multiple delivery strategies that involve multiple senses. The result is an overall array of experiences with opportunities that meet the needs of the few while enhancing the experience of everyone.

Following Universal Design for Learning Guidelines also benefits our aging population because it is physical limitations, such as deteriorating eyesight, hearing, and physical capabilities that are the core of the issues that seniors have with interpretive and recreational experiences, not their age.

Rather than list all the implications associated with those with disabilities, the overarching implication is that the Interpretive Program should adhere to UDL Guidelines to make the information accessible to all people, despite any impairment, whether it is visual, auditory, physical, or otherwise.

Appendix B: Parameters and Implications

Introduction

Parameters are those conditions under which visitor experiences and the associated Interpretive Program must be developed, such as monetary constraints, and under which it must function, such as weather, maintenance budget, etc. They are also called ‘givens,’ ‘circumstances’ and ‘constraints.’ Identifying parameters ensures selection and development of experiences and interpretive and wayfinding strategies and infrastructure that are effective and realistic, not idealistic.

The following section contains key parameters that could affect interpretive visitor interpretive experiences at the Visitor Center, and to some extent, the surrounding area. In reviewing the parameters, it is important to remember that they represent what *is*, not what should be or what is desired. It is also important to remember that people not engaged in the planning process will read this document, which is why it is important to include what you are already doing to deal with parameters and why.

Key Parameters

Budget

B-1: Budget for implementation will be limited. Preference should be given to low-tech strategies that do not cost as much money. This is consistent with the need to avoid technologies that cannot be fixed quickly and inexpensively due to the relative isolation of Tok and consequent potential difficulty in obtaining parts and qualified repair technicians quickly and inexpensively.

Environmental Conditions

E-1: Weather can be harsh in the winter. Outdoor signs and structures must be constructed of materials resistant to the weather conditions.

Staffing

S-1: The FWS has committed a staff person for the facility.

S-2: The FWS and other entities involved do not have staff time available to measure impacts from interpretive opportunities. To the extent possible, impacts will be measured, but measuring impact is going to heavily depend on focusing on indicators of success.

Vandalism and Theft

V-1: Theft is always an issue if authentic artifacts are displayed for the public. Either replicas or inexpensive artifacts should be used in displays if the item is small.

Safety Issues

SI-1: Visitors are not at unusual risk during a visit to the Visitor Center but are at some degree of risk from biological hazards, such as bears and moose if they choose to recreate in the area. Education about biological hazards should be a part of the information network.

Physical Infrastructure and Layout

P-1: The Visitor Center has a room currently dedicated to the library.

P-2: No public toilets will be available when the Visitor Center is closed (keeping the Center toilets open or installing porta-potties are not viable options, and there are no other public toilets in Tok). To the extent possible, it will be important to make sure visitors know of this situation before arriving in Tok.

P-3: The site has a significant amount of exterior space that is not paved, creating the opportunity to expand parking, planting a garden of some type, adding sculptures, etc.

P-4: The parking area has a large standpipe that has already been run into by vehicles a number of times. The parking area should be re-configured, the standpipe protected in a way that reduces the likelihood of people running into it, or – ideally – a new well drilled in a location not in the parking area and the existing standpipe and cap that well.

P-5: The structure has a separate room on the north side. This creates a good opportunity to dedicate that space for showing videos, conducting personal programs and holding meetings without interfering with other functions of the facility.

Location and Access

LA-1: The Visitor Center is located within the town of Tok, on one of the major highways. The facility is easy to find.

LA-2: The site has parking for RVs, although the parking area could be re-designed to be easier to use by people with longer vehicles.

LA-3: A park is located just across the street.

Policy and Legal Issues

PL-1: All operations must comply with ADA rules and regulations. All information presented within the Interpretive Network must be accessible in some way for those with disabilities.

PL-2: The main space must be accessible for functions, such as the school prom. All exhibits located in the interior space (not against the wall) should be easy to move.

PL-3: The building will contain both an area for dispensing orientation, wayfinding and trip planning information and an area for interpretive opportunities.

PL-4: The building is owned by the Chamber of Commerce and sub-let by the FWS. Chamber of Commerce activities will be a part of the building function.

Existing Information and Interpretive/Educational Opportunities

EI-1: The Visitor Center has multiple exhibits on the history and natural history of the area, but many are outdated and old. All will likely need to be replaced.

EI-2: The FWS has an Auto Tour (on a CD) for the Alaska Highway from Tok to the border crossing.

Other

O-1: Nothing large or that can damage the walls can be attached to the log walls.

O-2: High tech opportunities should be avoided due to the difficulty in repairing such devices.

O-3: The Chamber needs enough room to discharge their function and for their members (this can occur in the multipurpose room).

O-4: A way to display current information on the new mine on the Taylor Highway must be included within the Interpretive/Information Network.

O-5: Amenities outside the facility, such as picnic tables and porta-potties, are not an option because they attract use by elements of the population that are not conducive to a good visitor experience and cause an increase in maintenance.

Appendix C: Interpretive Inventory

Introduction

The Visitor Interpretive Experience Planning process includes selecting messages that will, if understood by the visitor, have the potential to cause a change in knowledge leading to an impact on attitudes and, ultimately, behavior that is consistent with the goals. Stories are the vehicles for communicating those messages. People become more interested in a story when they can see something related to it, and they are more likely to believe what they see than what they only hear or read. Therefore, the more an interpretive opportunity connects with and uses actual artifacts, specimens, features and other sensory stimuli in conveying information, the higher the potential for the interpretive opportunity to be effective. With that in mind, the Interpretive Inventory within the context of Visitor Interpretive Experience Planning is focused on identifying sensory stimuli and what stories can be told most effectively using those stimuli. Since this is an indoor space, it has the same advantages of a museum – it can obtain objects necessary to tell the stories it wants to tell. Consequently, there is not a need to inventory existing objectives, although a few are worth noting because they might be of use in the new set of exhibits.

Although this plan only covers the Tok Main Street Visitor Center, such places function best as a starting place for sending people to other locations where they can ‘see’ the real story. With that in mind, some significant features in the surrounding area have been noted in a separate inventory.

Current Features: Current Visitor Center

Feature	Story or stories	Comments
Wildlife mounts on walls		Many of these can be retained, although they might need to be moved.
Taxidermy birds		
Wolf display		Eliminate – takes up too much room
Bear Display		The current mounted bear is shabby, plus it is a coastal grizzly, not an interior grizzly; however, it is popular with travelers, many of whom take their picture with it.
Fish display		Eliminate
Historic photographs of building the Alaska Highway		These can probably be repurposed
Native crafts		These can probably be repurposed
Dog mushing and races		
History of Valdez		This should be eliminated
Exploring Fairbanks kiosk		This should be eliminated
Model of home site		This may be able to be repurposed for the Sustainable Lifestyle exhibit component
Poster exhibit of Tetlin NWR		This should be eliminated
Exhibit on gold rushes of AK		This will be replaced by gold rushes that shaped this part of the state
Panel on interior Alaska		This will be covered in the exhibit on

		Sustainable Lifestyle because the conditions under which people live will be included.
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Key Features: Surrounding Area

Feature	Story or Stories	Comments
Buildings associated with Fort Egbert	Mining history	
Gold Dredge at Chicken	Mining history	
Dredge spoils along south fork of Fortymile River	Mining history	
Chicken	Mining history	Site of biggest gold discovery in AK
Yukon River	Importance of transportation routes (rivers) on cultural activity	
Historic buildings in Eagle	Mining history, Alaska history	Trading post for people in the Yukon Territory and the surrounding area in AK, especially during the Klondike Gold Rush.
Old vehicles in the 'garage' at old Fort Egbert	Alaska history	
Stable at old Fort Egbert	Alaska history	
Alaska Highway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of the Alaska highway on development of Alaska • Importance of an overland route to Alaska during WW II • Impact of military on development of this part of AK 	
Tok	Impact of Alaska Highway on development of eastern Interior Alaska	
Alaska Range	Geomorphology	
Tanana River	Importance of transportation routes (rivers) in cultural activity	
Historic Eagle Trail	Alaska history	Mail route from Valdez to Eagle
Tetlin Passage	Human history, Alaska history, bird migrations, Tetlin NWR	
Northway airport	WWII history Impact of military	This runway may have been built on a graveyard. It may be worth confirming this information, and if true, mentioning it in the exhibit. It would also be an opportune time to mention how legislation since WWII specifically protects sites like these.
Northway and Native	ANILCA	

American homes along the Alaska Highway		
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Appendix D: Input on TMSVC Objectives

The following information was gathered by having staff at the refuge fill in the blanks in the following sentence:

As a result of experiencing [Identify Refuge] and/or its interpretive opportunities, (target audience) will/will not (do what?) . The result will be (impact on the resource or agency) .

Refuge	Audience	Do what?	Result (Impact)
	Outdoor Recreationists	Do practice Play Clean Go and Clean Drain Dry principles	
	Tourists	Do their research to be aware of common invasive species in Alaska	
	Locals/Hunters/Foragers	Do be the first line of response to report invasive species observations in remote areas or in new sites	
	Locals	Do not release pets or garden plants (e.g., trees, shrubs, forbs) outside of your home	
	Hunters	Do not introduce invasive species into remote areas	
	Fishermen/women	Do be on the lookout for Elodea and other aquatic invasive species	
	Fishermen/women	Do not dump bait wells into Alaskan waterways	
	Tent campers	Do check tent and other camping equipment for invasive plant material	
	People moving to AK	Do clean their gear (e.g., boots, backpacks, boats, etc.) before bringing them into Alaska	
	People moving to AK	Do not transport dirty gear that might contain standing water, plant materials, or other living things	
	General tourists	Will not have access to go to villages unless they have the council's permission – way	

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		finding to a village is not recommended	
	General tourist	Will be interested in a general story of Athabaskan progression though time and where we are today.	
	General public and tourist	Our subsistence uses are still rooted in our practices of spiritual, ceremonial, and communal sharing.	
	K-12 villages schools	Small discrete push button audio recordings of Athabaskan words for animals, tools, and place names for education, tourist curiosity, and the general public scattered around the VC. Students and tourist will have the ability to tell a story of when they learned a word or phrase from the Tok VC.	
	Summer Traveler, Retired, middle to upper middle-class American	Go visit a place they did not know about until visiting the Tok VC	
	Summer Traveler, foreign tourist	Learn about the diversity of public lands in the US by visiting them	
	Summer Traveler, Retired, middle to upper middle-class American	Visit at least one other VC from the different agencies (NPS, BLM, FS)	
	Local Upper Tanana Resident	Visit another place nearby (WRST, Eagle) they have not been to before	
	Non-local Alaskan tourist	Visit parts of the state they have never been before	
	Non-local Alaskan hunter/fisher	Learn local values about subsistence, respect boundaries, and act within the regulations	
	New to Alaska resident	Come back within the first year	
	Local students	Attend a summer offering at the VC (interpretive talk, outdoor event, cultural education)	
	RVer	<i>As by far the #1 user group of the [Fortymile river country], the VC has an opportunity to serve this user the most. The [Fortymile river</i>	

		<p><i>country]is usually not considered a “destination” and is mostly driven through only to get to some other place. A very common trip is to enter Alaska via the Alaskan highway and leave Alaska via the Taylor Highway or vice versa. Therefore, the VC will be serving RVers that will not be returning to the 40 mile and for that I would encourage the VC to present the RVers with other BLM lands throughout the state such as Tangle Lakes, Arctic Visitor Center, etc.</i></p> <p><i>On the other hand, for those RVers that will soon be departing Alaska through the [Fortymile river country], the VC will have an opportunity to introduce the 40 mile and “set the stage.” The audience most likely has very little information or knowledge on what they are about to see, so the “THEME WORKSHEET” comes in handy here...</i></p>	
	Paddler	<p>Know the various river trip options and where to put in and take out of the river, understand the “danger” spots better, possibly be assisted in checking the river gauges online to understand how high the water is, be given advice on places to camp along the river</p>	
	Hunter	<p>Know where to camp and what amenities the campgrounds have, or what amenities the businesses in Chicken have. Gain a better understanding of trailheads and/or river put ins</p>	
	Gold Prospector	<p>Know where the public gold panning area is, be given a “map handout” abide by regulations and rules, know where to camp and what amenities the campground has</p>	

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	Suction Dredger/Miner	Questions dealing with long term camping can be directed to District office, miners can know where to go for services and know that the campgrounds amenities are only for paying campers	
	Biker/Motorcyclist	West Fork and Walker Fork Campgrounds both have drinking water and sites exclusively for bikers and motorcyclists	
	In-state and out of State Travelers	Will be aware of challenging highway conditions north of Chicken.	
		Will be aware of camping opportunities along the Taylor Highway.	
		Will be aware of the rich mining history of the Fortymile area.	
		Will be aware of Eagle, AK, Fort Egbert NHLS, NPS headquarters for YC, and amenities.	
		Will be aware of wildlife viewing opportunities.	
	Fall Hunters	Will be aware of hunting and land use regulations.	
	Tourists	Want to learn about rec opportunities / eat food / buy gear / want maps or brochures /	
	Locals	invest in tourism / invest in the town of Tok / protect natural resources	
	Businesses	Advertise in the Visitor Center / Promote Tok to a wider audience	
	Military	Seek information about traveling in AK / hunting info, / plan to stay in Tok a night or two when leaving AK.	
	Alaskans	Plan a trip to Tok or incorporate it into a road trip/seek job there.	
	Unplanned visitors	Stay for a meal /walk around town / go into stores	
	Miners	Restock on supplies / invest in a claim	

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 Draft Final VIEP
 October 7, 2022

	Real estate	Use information to advertise about benefits of living in Tok	
	Pipeline workers	Look for real estate / spend time and \$ on days off	
	Canadians	\$ exchange or want to use Canadian \$	
	Europeans	Learn more about European heritage in AK / stay in town / eat locally	
	Asians	Go to gift shops / take a guided tour / spend \$	
	Retired RVer	Look for places to stay in RV in Tok / eat in restaurant / look for real estate	
	Hunters / anglers	Plan a trip to Tok to hunt / research public lands / book a hunting guide in Tok	
	Skiers	Tok air services / avalanche safety information	

Appendix E: Input on TMSVS Messages

The following information was gathered by asking staff to fill in either or both of the following sentence as many times as they wanted to.

After learning about _____ **(topic)** _____, I want people to know that _____ **(message)** _____.

After experiencing / learning about **[topic or area]** I want people to know that _____ **(message)** _____.

Topic or area	Message
Subsistence	People continue to live off the land in the Upper Tanana
Subsistence	Public lands are resources that people can use consumptively and sustainably
Migrations	Protected and wild landscapes allow modern migrations of wildlife
Tetlin NWR	TNWR is part of the NWRS
Tetlin NWR	Is one of 16 Alaska Refuges
Tetlin NWR	Wildlife refuges are places of multiple uses including hunting and fishing
Upper Tanana	Is surrounded by protected landscapes (in US and Canada)
Eastern Interior	There are many opportunities to experience Alaska
Cowden/M.F. Dredge	Trail description and elevation profile, How it worked, how it was carried in pieces to the country, how much wood it burned, when it went offline
40 Mile Wild Scenic River	Large drainage network, longest NWSR Unit in Nation, why color of water is tannish, where river can be accessed, popular float trips, why as a wild and scenic river there are engines (boats and suction dredges) operating, expect to see hovercrafts, rapids
Campgrounds	Mile 49, 82, and Eagle, cost to stay, type of sites, amenities, history of sites (Lassen airstrip), camp host staffed
Jack Wade	Public gold panning area, history of Jack Wade Townsite, amount of gold pulled out of this section of river, why still considered part of the national wild and scenic river system
Top of the World Highway - Boundary	Why is it paved, history of Boundary, Davis Dome Wayside

Poker Creek Border Crossing	Time border station is open, what is allowed and not allowed across border, only customs station in nation that is shared with Canada, distance and time to Dawson City
Chicken	3 Business, airport, amenities, activities such as gold panning, camping, gold dredge tours, mail plane, dredge display, post office, trails around Chicken, Chickenstock [music festival], etc.
Tisha's Schoolhouse and Old Chicken	Tour times and history of story, location of old chicken versus new chicken
Eagle	Dangerous drive 100 miles from Chicken, not recommended for large rigs, road accessible in summer but isolated in winter, business, gas stations, services, restaurants, etc.
Ft. Egbert	Why fort was built, what time period, why fort was abandoned, explanation of buildings, etc.
Eagle-Valdez Trail	Historic significance, not necessarily a trail, telegraph line
Pre- contact	Extensive trade networks, relationships and copper usage, a wide array of practical tools for survival.
Contact	Introduction to new trade goods and the adoption of new technologies to increase subsistence while continuing our traditional practices.
Modern	Becoming active participants in conservation, politics, and subsistence advocates for the future of all our resources.
There needs to be more work put into the idea of a general Athabascan Story that incorporates a sliver of all represented tribes into the whole.	
Invasive Species	Alaska has a unique opportunity to prevent the introduction of invasive species
Invasive Species	Every person coming through the center can play a role by either preventing the spread of invasive species or reporting sightings
Invasive Species	Some basic principles folks can use to prevent the spread of invasive species include CleanDrainDry and PlayCleanGo
Invasive Species	People can report invasive species to 1-877-INVASIV or using the ADF&G Online Portal
Invasive plants	Invasive plants can be spread via vehicles and muddy boots and can often be found in disturbed sites where humans have been
Pressed invasive plants and other demo items	Basic identification of invasive species they might encounter (e.g., Bird Vetch, White sweetclover, Elodea)

Invasive Species	Alaska has no known crayfish, lizards, freshwater turtles, or snakes so any of these would be invasive
Educational toolkit	There are a variety of invasive species that we are concerned about in Alaska
Ticks	Alaska has 2 native ticks, but others are being introduced via means such as people’s pets or on introduced species like mule deer
Ticks	Harmful ticks can transfer to animals (like moose) whose range is expanding and further spread throughout AK
Elodea	People can utilize principles like Clean Drain Dry to prevent the spread of Elodea (AK’s first aquatic invasive plant)
Human impact	Humans are a common pathway for the spread invasive species for a variety of reasons including how we recreate (e.g., carrying invasive species on gear or boots), own pets (e.g., release of pets that become invasive species), and maintain our gardens (e.g., planting invasive plants)
Clean Drain Dry	Equipment that comes in contact with water (especially sites with confirmed invasive species) should clean all items, drain all standing water, and allow equipment to thoroughly dry
Play Clean Go	Outdoor recreationists can maintain the quality of their experience by cleaning their gear between uses to prevent the introduction or spread of invasive species
Boot brush station	Boot brush stations and cleaning your boots are an easy and effective way to prevent the spread of invasive species
Invasive Species	Threaten the food and drinking sources people in Alaska rely on
Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination	The USFWS, Customs and Border Protection, and the state of Alaska partner together to maintain a watercraft inspection station at the Alaska-Canada Port of Entry as a first line of defense against invasive species.
Chicken	Be sure and visit the Post Office and the Old Jack Wade Dredge display across the street from it.
Mosquito Fork Dredge Trail	A great hiking opportunity to see the remnants of the old dredge below. Trail is under 1 mile and well-marked.
BLM Campgrounds Walker Fork and West Fork	BLM has hosts at these sites that are full of information and wonderful to talk to.
Jack Wade Creek	BLM has a recreational mining area north of the Walker Fork Campground open for those interested. (non-motorized).
Caribou	The caribou migrate through the Taylor Highway area. Though you may not see one at other times you may encounter hundreds or thousands of them.

Mining	The Fortymile mining area has a rich past dating back to the late 1800's. A number of old townsites still dot the country in various levels of condition. Mining still continues today and can be seen along the way. These mines are all authorized and monitored by either State or Federal agencies.
Recreation	Wrangell St. Elias is nearby / ways to travel to these places.
Permafrost	It causes the roads to form waves / it is melting at faster rates now than before
Native culture	The natives lived on these lands and used them differently that it is now
Hospitality	There are places to stay and eat in Tok
Public land	There are maps that clearly show public / private land boundaries (especially for hunters) / there are mining claims on public lands / there are user restrictions on public lands
biology / ecology	There is a diversity of flora and fauna near Tok
History	The Alcan highway was not a simple task to construct. What brought people to Tok to settle it.