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EAGLE
DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN
& ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
YUKON-CHARLEY RIVERS NATIONAL PRESERVE * ALASKA
JULY 1994



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07/20/94

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8/26/94

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**EAGLE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
YUKON-CHARLEY RIVERS NATIONAL PRESERVE * ALASKA**

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INTRODUCTION

Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve (YUCH) was established by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980. Shortly thereafter, a General Management Plan (GMP) was initiated to determine management strategies and the location of facilities for the preserve. After an extensive public involvement process, the plan was approved in 1985. Among other things, it called for preserve headquarters to be located in Eagle. While this decision has proven to be controversial, interim preserve facilities have since been developed.

The current planning process was started in 1991 in response to two factors: 1) the need to provide permanent facilities to adequately accommodate preserve users and staff and 2) the need to re-examine the earlier GMP decision to locate preserve headquarters in Eagle.

The planning team met with Eagle and Eagle Village residents, Native and Non-native, on several occasions in 1991 and early 1992 to seek input. During open houses, community workshops, one-on-one meetings and via responses to a planning newsletter, the team heard a wide variety of opinions about where preserve facilities should be located. While some felt that all National Park Service (NPS) development should be relocated to Fairbanks (or elsewhere), others felt that it should remain in Eagle. Within the Eagle area, approximately twelve different sites were suggested as possibilities to consider for preserve facilities. In May 1992 ten preliminary alternatives were reviewed in a public workshop in Eagle.

These alternatives considered Eagle, Tok, Circle, and Fairbanks as possible locations for NPS YUCH Headquarters, and placed different functions within these towns. Whether the function required a seasonal or year-round presence also varied for each location. The alternatives became very detailed and suggested particular kinds of development for specific sites.

As the team continued to evaluate public input and work through the planning process, Tok was dropped from consideration, because it was located far from the preserve and inter-agency coordination would not be improved. Circle was also dropped as a possible headquarters site, but retained as a potential district operation. The team decided that preserve operations and development for Circle/Central and Coal Creek, as shown on the maps for Alternative A, B, and C in this document would not change from the GMP. It also became obvious that the final plan should not deal with specific sites. Because of uncertainties regarding the acquisition of specific land parcels, the primary planning issue was narrowed down to determine whether YUCH Headquarters should remain in Eagle or be relocated to Fairbanks. Thus, the document approaches the issue from a broader perspective: Eagle or Fairbanks, not what type of facilities would go on any particular parcel.

Upon the vacancy of the superintendent's position in March, 1993, the NPS made an interim decision, based on the early phases of the planning process, and the lack of available housing, to advertise this position as being located in Fairbanks. With the selection of the preferred alternative the interim decision became the final decision and the superintendent's position is now located in Fairbanks.

This document is the final Development Concept Plan (DCP) and Environmental Assessment. The environmental assessment was originally released with the draft DCP and is included with the final DCP for your convenience. The purpose of the final DCP is to describe the selected alternative. The NPS has selected the preferred alternative (B) as the management solution which most meets the need of YUCH. The public comments were considered and are reflected in this document.

PURPOSE AND NEED

Purpose

The purpose of the Eagle Development Concept Plan (DCP) and Environmental Assessment (EA) is to evaluate and determine the most suitable location of the Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve (YUCH) Headquarters and other operating functions. The NPS is considering alternatives that address whether the headquarters would remain in Eagle or would be relocated to Fairbanks. If the headquarters is relocated this plan would determine, what preserve functions would be established in each location, and what facilities are necessary for preserve management.

The analysis in the DCP/EA has formed the basis for the decision on where the headquarters and functions will be located. This EA has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.9).

When NPS begins implementation, the preserve superintendent and the NPS regional office would locate potential sites, complete site evaluations, then negotiate for procurement of these sites or facilities. Once selected, specific environmental compliance in accordance with NEPA would be completed prior to NPS proceeding with development of facilities. This DCP would amend the GMP if facilities are located in places different from those recommended in the GMP.

Need

The present facilities are inadequate for the existing preserve operations. The preserve staff has outgrown the administrative offices now located just outside the city boundary of Eagle on land withdrawn by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and used by the NPS under an interagency agreement. In addition, the agreement for this building and the 12-acre site expires in 1994. Visitor contact is currently performed on this site in a small, portable structure with little display space and no public restrooms. Lands located at the airport are leased from the State of Alaska and used by some of the staff.

A severe lack of housing in Eagle has limited permanent and seasonal staff recruitment and retention. Presently park staff provide their own living accommodations, which generally consist of cabins or small homes without running water or indoor plumbing.

Issues and Concerns

A concern of the NPS is the ability to continue carrying out the mandated responsibilities in an efficient and effective manner best supporting the long range objectives and management of the preserve. Adequate staffing in appropriate locations is necessary to ensure the protection of resources, for visitor services and safety, for conducting natural and cultural resource inventories and research, and for administrative support services. Adequate facilities are also needed to support these functions.

A longstanding issue is the opposition to the NPS within the community of Eagle and the desire to see the NPS presence decreased from its present level. This controversial relationship has existed between some of the Eagle vicinity residents and the NPS since the establishment of YUCH. Eagle vicinity residents have varying views on the amount of NPS presence required, the activities the NPS needs to conduct, and where the facilities should be located.

An NPS concern is the availability of suitable office space to lease and land for potential building and housing construction. The GMP addresses the establishment of necessary facilities outside the preserve. The NPS is directed by the GMP to first seek to enter into memorandums of agreement with government or Native land owners for the cooperative use of land and improvements. When acquisition is required, efforts will be made to acquire Native-owned lands from willing sellers prior to acquiring other private lands (ANILCA Sec.1306).

DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B Preferred Alternative	Alternative C
Fairbanks	No facilities or functions would be located in Fairbanks.	Headquarters would be moved to Fairbanks. This includes the superintendent, administrative officer and other personnel necessary to support the administrative function of the Preserve. Office space will be acquired in a commercial building. Employees will provide their own housing. Future duty stations of Preserve staff will be determined by the superintendent based on where their work can best be accomplished. Locations could include Circle/Central, Coal Creek, Eagle, or Fairbanks.	Headquarters would be moved to Fairbanks. This includes the superintendent and most other NPS functions. Staff from ranger activities/visitor contact, resource management, subsistence, and maintenance could be relocated. Office space for headquarters, maintenance, and aircraft facilities would be acquired in a commercial building, through purchase or lease. Staff, equipment, and supplies would be transported to the preserve by automobile, aircraft, or boat. Future duty stations of preserve staff would be determined by the superintendent based on where their work can best be accomplished.
Eagle	Headquarters would remain in Eagle. Ranger activities, resource management, subsistence, maintenance, and visitor contact would be located in the existing facilities at the present headquarters site and at the airport. All facilities would remain status quo. Preserve staff, both seasonal and permanent, would be responsible to provide their own housing.	Even with the relocation of the superintendent, administration, and possibly other management functions, new or improved facilities will be required. Ranger activities (protection and interpretation, aircraft and boat operations) and maintenance functions will remain at the present site, within the historic district, near the airport, or along the Taylor Highway. Housing needs would be based on eventual location of functions, but could include four duplex housing units and one eight room seasonal dormitory. Location of facilities (in or near Eagle) will depend on negotiation with land owners, access, natural, and cultural resource concerns.	The NPS presence in Eagle would be scaled back to a district operation. The present headquarters facility would become a seasonal visitor contact station, all other functions would be located at the airport. Facilities at the airport would remain status quo. One duplex housing unit would be built or acquired either within or outside of Eagle depending upon negotiation with landowners.



CIRCLE/CENTRAL

PER GMP:

- VISITOR CONTACT-JOINT NPS/FWS, SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATIONS
- EMPLOYEE HOUSING

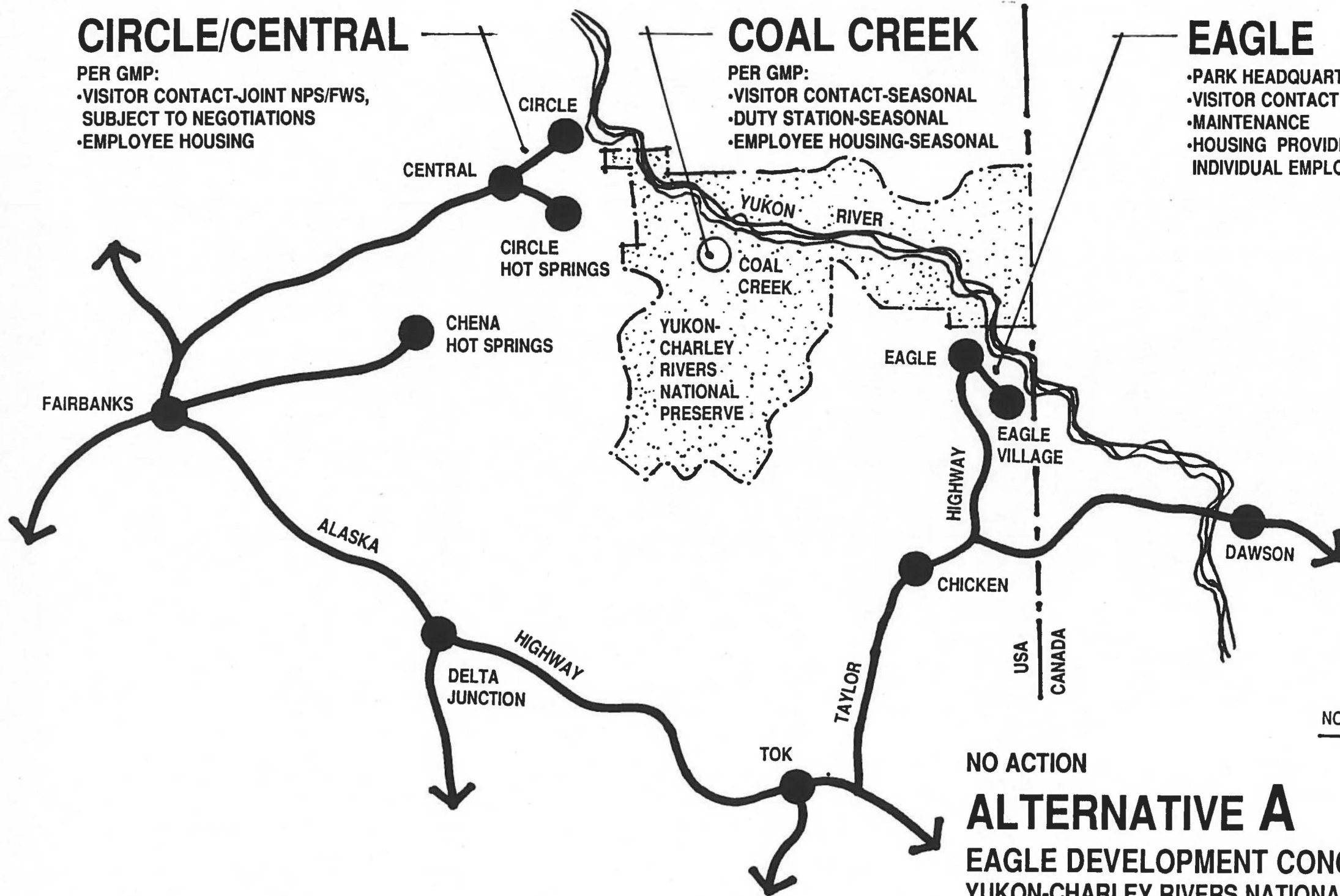
COAL CREEK

PER GMP:

- VISITOR CONTACT-SEASONAL
- DUTY STATION-SEASONAL
- EMPLOYEE HOUSING-SEASONAL

EAGLE

- PARK HEADQUARTERS
- VISITOR CONTACT
- MAINTENANCE
- HOUSING PROVIDED BY INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEES



NO ACTION

ALTERNATIVE A

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CIRCLE/CENTRAL

PER GMP:

- VISITOR CONTACT-JOINT NPS/FWS, SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATIONS
- EMPLOYEE HOUSING

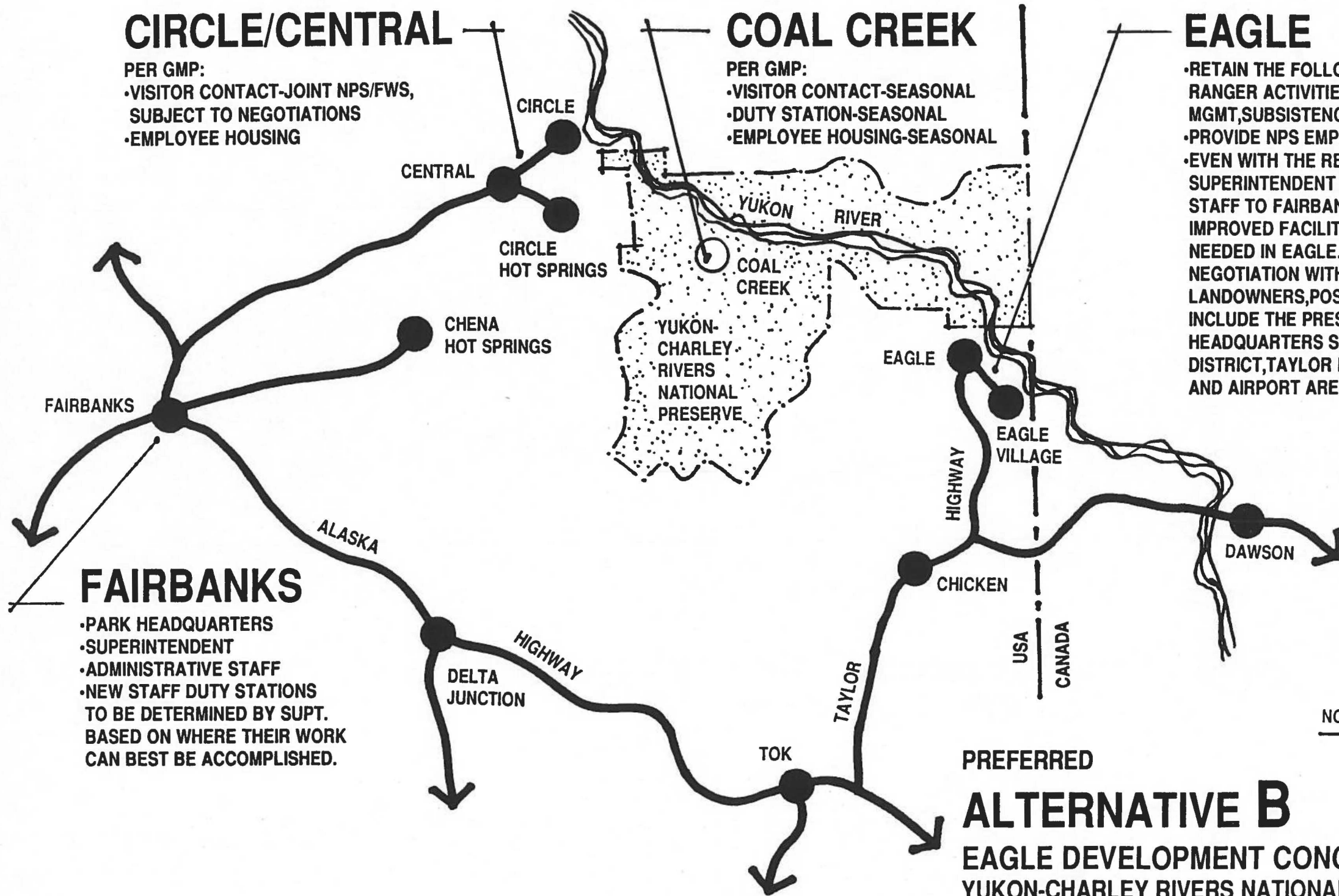
COAL CREEK

PER GMP:

- VISITOR CONTACT-SEASONAL
- DUTY STATION-SEASONAL
- EMPLOYEE HOUSING-SEASONAL

EAGLE

- RETAIN THE FOLLOWING FUNCTIONS: RANGER ACTIVITIES, RESOURCE MGMT,SUBSISTENCE,MAINTENANCE
- PROVIDE NPS EMPLOYEE HOUSING
- EVEN WITH THE RELOCATION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT & ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF TO FAIRBANKS, NEW OR IMPROVED FACILITIES WILL BE NEEDED IN EAGLE. SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATION WITH EXISTING LANDOWNERS,POSSIBLE SITES INCLUDE THE PRESENT HEADQUARTERS SITE, HISTORIC DISTRICT,TAYLOR HIGHWAY AND AIRPORT AREA.



FAIRBANKS

- PARK HEADQUARTERS
- SUPERINTENDENT
- ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF
- NEW STAFF DUTY STATIONS TO BE DETERMINED BY SUPT. BASED ON WHERE THEIR WORK CAN BEST BE ACCOMPLISHED.

PREFERRED

ALTERNATIVE B

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CIRCLE/CENTRAL

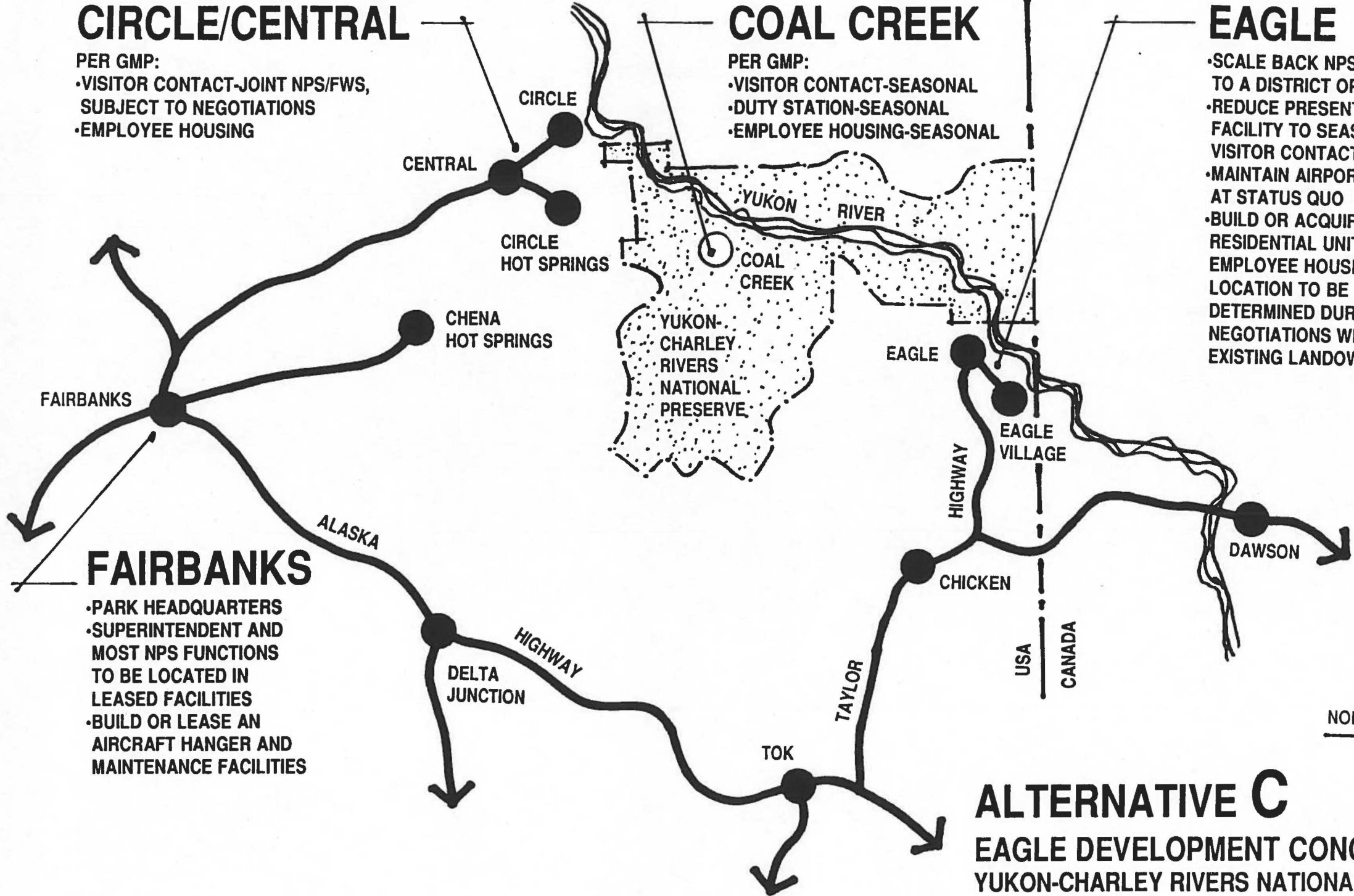
- PER GMP:
- VISITOR CONTACT-JOINT NPS/FWS, SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATIONS
 - EMPLOYEE HOUSING

COAL CREEK

- PER GMP:
- VISITOR CONTACT-SEASONAL
 - DUTY STATION-SEASONAL
 - EMPLOYEE HOUSING-SEASONAL

EAGLE

- SCALE BACK NPS PRESENCE TO A DISTRICT OPERATION
- REDUCE PRESENT HEADQUARTERS FACILITY TO SEASONAL VISITOR CONTACT STATION
- MAINTAIN AIRPORT FACILITIES AT STATUS QUO
- BUILD OR ACQUIRE TWO RESIDENTIAL UNITS FOR NPS EMPLOYEE HOUSING AT A LOCATION TO BE DETERMINED DURING NEGOTIATIONS WITH EXISTING LANDOWNERS



FAIRBANKS

- PARK HEADQUARTERS
- SUPERINTENDENT AND MOST NPS FUNCTIONS TO BE LOCATED IN LEASED FACILITIES
- BUILD OR LEASE AN AIRCRAFT HANGER AND MAINTENANCE FACILITIES

ALTERNATIVE C
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AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Cultural Resources

Archeological survey and excavations throughout the Eagle and Eagle Village area reveal a variety of human activities and life styles throughout the past. Traditionally the Han Athabaskan Indians occupied the south banks of the Yukon River, subsisting on the caribou, moose, bear, salmon, grayling, berries and ducks. During the late nineteenth century, the Han had semipermanent camps near the mouth of Mission Creek and further upstream on the Yukon River near the present site of Eagle Village. Trading posts were established in the area during the period of 1880 to 1883 and may have operated throughout the 1880's.

The next decade was dominated by a search for gold, encouraged by the Klondike discovery in 1896. Miners flocked to the Eagle area in 1898, representing an overflow of disappointed gold seekers returning from the Yukon Territory. Eagle City emerged this year to cater to and house the new population (Shinkwin 1978). The core area of the Eagle Historic District reflects the historic city center and architecture of this historic period. Because of the Eagle City's importance during this era, the Eagle National Historic Landmark District was established in 1970.

Coinciding with, and not unrelated to these activities, the United States Army established the Fort Egbert military reservation at Eagle in 1899 for purposes of protecting the national border and assisting the miners and travelers to the upper Yukon area. As mining waned, and the Fort Egbert military reservation was abandoned in 1911, the area was then occupied by a small population (Native and non-Native) in two communities separated by three miles (Eagle City and Eagle Village). Han residents continue to live in Eagle Village, though their traditional lifeways have been greatly impacted by the gold rush, military presence, road access, and other Western influences. Today, many people continue to make a living from the land surrounding Eagle as in earlier times by hunting, fishing, trapping, and other activities necessary to support a rural lifestyle.

The present headquarters site is located on and surrounded by a large prehistoric and protohistoric Athabastcan site.

Existing Facilities (outside preserve)

The headquarters building (900 square feet) and the visitor contact station (350 square feet) are located north of Eagle adjacent to a small grass airstrip under the jurisdiction of BLM. To obtain access to the NPS facilities, employees and visitors must cross this airstrip. Approximately one aircraft per day in the summer and at least one per day during the winter use this airstrip. This is the only airstrip for ski-equipped aircraft in the Eagle area. It is not used by the NPS aircraft.

The NPS facilities located at the Eagle airport, on a state lease include an office building (700 square feet), maintenance shop (1800 square feet), three small tent frames, fenced area for boat storage, supplies, vehicles, and the aircraft. A hangar has recently been constructed. On a year-round basis, approximately five to ten aircraft per day use this airport. If development corporations are actively at work in the area, aircraft use is substantially higher, especially helicopters. Aircraft use is extremely variable from year to year.

Within Eagle, at the locations where facilities would be leased or constructed, there are no dams or subsurface mines. Placer mining, however, has occurred in the Eagle vicinity. There are no known hazardous waste sites within Eagle town, at the Eagle airstrip, or at potential NPS development areas along Taylor Highway. An abandoned city landfill, is located on BLM land near the present headquarters site.

Fire Management

Eagle and the surrounding area are designated critical for fire suppression in the Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan for the Fortymile Planning Area. Eagle has a small volunteer fire department for structural fires.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Floodplain Management

The 100-year and 500-year floodplains have never been mapped for the Yukon River or its tributaries in or near the preserve, including Eagle. Factors such as local snowmelt and thunderstorms, distant upstream glacial melt, and temporary damming by ice jams during spring breakup can cause locally severe flooding anywhere along the rivers. The Corps of Engineers rates the flood hazard at Eagle as high-average (USACE 1982). Major flooding has occurred since the late 1960s. The cause of these floods was recorded as stream overflow caused by ice jams.

Soil Management/Permafrost

The Eagle area is underlain by discontinuous permafrost. The top layer can be found as little as two to three feet below the surface during the summer. Permafrost can affect subsurface drainage, causing unstable soil conditions on sloping surfaces. When the surface is disturbed, the permafrost melts, often causing soil collapse, which could affect vegetation, soil, and the potential for development.

Subsistence

Fairbanks North Star Borough has been determined to be non-rural, therefore residents are not eligible for subsistence uses. Eagle is considered to be rural, with Eagle residents eligible for subsistence uses. The communities of Eagle and Fairbanks are both located within Game Management Unit (GMU) 20. Subsistence uses by local rural residents are allowed in the national preserve by Title VIII of ANILCA.

Federal subsistence hunting and trapping activities within the Eagle area and the preserve occur near the Yukon, Kandik, Nation, Seventymile, and Charley River drainages. Within GMU 20, over 300 rural subsistence users, who have customarily and traditionally utilized resources, continue to practice a subsistence lifestyle. The region's main subsistence resources are fish (salmon), bears, moose, caribou, furbearers, waterfowl, small game, edible plants, and wood products.

A subsistence harvest may vary considerably from previous years from factors such as weather, migration patterns, and natural population cycles. The regional pattern, however, is assumed to generally be applicable to subsistence harvests in recent times.

Threatened and Endangered Species

One pair of the endangered American peregrine falcon (Falco peregrines anatum) generally nest within one mile of Eagle on Eagle Bluff. Other peregrines nest on several smaller south-facing cliffs across the Yukon River from Eagle Village. The falcons that choose these sites appear habituated to the level and type of human activity experienced in these areas.

Four plant species listed as Category 2 candidate species are found on State of Alaska land within 1/2 mile of the present headquarters site. These species are members of a treeless arctic steppe plant community found only on bluffs in the upper Yukon valley.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Vegetation

The natural vegetation found within Eagle and Eagle Village has previously been altered by human development. The vegetation surrounding Eagle is part of the North American taiga, an extensive subarctic forest dominated by conifers and several species of deciduous hardwoods.

The lowlands along the Yukon River and Mission Creek are forested with bottomland spruce/poplar forest. Characteristic understory woody species include willow, alder, and wild rose. Horsetail and mosses are common ground cover.

Poorly drained areas underlain by permafrost are dominated by black spruce and a mixture of wetland species, including labrador tea, cottongrass, sedges, blueberries, and mosses.

White spruce mixed with paper birch dominates the uplands, with stands of aspen on well-drained south-facing slopes. The majority of the upland sites are second growth forests.

Visual Quality

The area within the vicinity of Eagle is relatively free from visual impacts. The Taylor highway and numerous sled/snow machine trails are the only signs of human development around Eagle. In addition, very few buildings or other facilities exist outside of Eagle and Eagle village, therefore, the natural viewshed from Eagle is unimpaired.

Wetlands Protection

The National Wetland Inventory has not been completed for the Eagle area. The vegetative species and soils within the lowland areas around the airport indicate that these areas could be classified as wetlands. The upland sites such as higher elevations at the airport and along Taylor Highway most likely would not be considered wetlands.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Wildlife Habitat and Populations

Mammals (other than caribou):

Habitat within and immediately surrounding Eagle and Eagle Village has already been altered by development. Migration routes for large mammals or furbearers are not known to occur. Moose including cows and calves are often observed in wetlands adjacent to the airport particularly during summer and late winter. They utilize tall willow scrub and mixed forest for cover. Most resident wildlife appear to habituate to the current level of human use.

Caribou:

Eagle is located within the Fortymile caribou range. The herd has significantly reduced from historic size due to overharvest, predation, emigration, and reduced winter range by fire. Presently between 20,000 and 22,000 animals, the herd is actively managed by the State of Alaska to reach a target of 60,000 by the year 2000. This herd historically made little use of the Eagle vicinity, however, caribou use of this area could increase with a larger herd size.

Birds:

Natural habitat within and immediately surrounding Eagle and Eagle Village has already been altered by development. The majority of bird species found in the vicinity of Eagle are migratory and inhabit the area briefly in spring and fall. The upper Yukon valley is a primary migration corridor for waterfowl, sandhill cranes, and shorebirds that summer farther north. Open leads in the Yukon River, wetlands at the Eagle airport, and ponded meltwater throughout town are important resting habitat. Open meadows and lawns provide foraging grounds for migratory passerines, such as lapland longspurs, and sparrows.

Twenty species of raptors migrate through this area and of these, eighteen nest in the area surrounding Eagle. Many raptors prey on other migratory birds, and are particularly common at the airport and open areas along the Yukon River during spring and fall. There are no bald or golden eagle nest sites known within the immediate vicinity of Eagle.

Common year round residents include ravens, boreal chickadees, several species of grouse, and gray jays. Mixed spruce/birch forest and riparian poplar/willow forest provide nesting habitat for warblers, woodpeckers, flycatchers, and thrushes.

Fish:

The Yukon River and Mission Creek border the city of Eagle. Fish common to these waters are salmon, grayling, and pike.

IMPACTS OF ALTERNATIVES

Resource Concerns	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B Preferred Alternative	Alternative C
Cultural Resources	<p>The use and overcrowding of the headquarters facility, would continue to cause degradation of the historic building which is potentially eligible as an historic structure. Any expansion or enhancement of the present headquarters facility that would involve ground-disturbing activities could impact significant cultural resource remains, including burials. Based on available information, there are no known archeological or historic resources associated with the existing facilities at the airport.</p>	<p>Within Fairbanks most likely an existing non-historic building would be used, therefore, there would not be any anticipated impacts to cultural resources. Within Eagle the construction of an administrative office, visitor center, maintenance facility, and employee housing, dependent upon the location, may have an impact upon the Eagle National Historic Landmark District. Since Eagle Village is removed from the district, the Han residents would not be affected. Design for new construction would need to satisfy the design standards as recommended by BLM in 1975. Use of an existing historic structure within the core area of the Eagle Historic District for a visitor contact station would result in the preservation of a historic structure. Any expansion or enhancement of the present headquarters facility that would involve ground-disturbing activities could impact significant cultural resource remains, including burials. Proposed development could have the potential to impact known and unknown archeological resources in the area.</p>	<p>Within Fairbanks there would not be any anticipated impacts to cultural resources. Potential construction of two employee housing units in Eagle, dependent upon the location, could impact the Eagle National Historic Landmark District. Since Eagle Village is removed from the district, the Han residents would not be affected. Design for new construction would need to satisfy the design standards as recommended by BLM in 1975. Any expansion or enhancement of the present headquarters facility that would involve ground-disturbing activities could impact significant cultural resource remains, including burials. The proposed housing development has the potential to impact known and unknown archeological resources of the area.</p>

Resource Concerns	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B Preferred Alternative	Alternative C
Fire Management	No impact. Fire risk or suppression needs would not change.	Within Fairbanks adverse impacts would not be expected. Possible adverse impact within Eagle. If new facilities were constructed on undeveloped lands outside of Eagle, the potential risk of fire and suppression needs could increase. This would be considered in the site design and would be mitigated by removing dead timber, using firebreaks, and providing structural fire protection.	Same as no action alternative
Floodplain Management	The floodplains have not been mapped in the Eagle area. The present headquarters facility, along with Eagle City are near the Yukon River and could be located in the 100 year floodplain. The floodplain is most likely already adversely affected by the siting of the existing facilities. A potential for flood damage exists at the headquarters facility. The NPS facilities at the Eagle airport most likely are not located in the 100 year floodplain, but may be within the 500 year floodplain.	Acquiring leased facilities in Fairbanks would most likely not have an adverse impact. Construction in Fairbanks, however, depending on the location may result in impacts to floodplains. Within Eagle, there could be an adverse impact depending on the location of the leased and/or new facilities. The potential for flooding near Eagle depends on the location of the site in relation to the Yukon River and the elevation of the site. Ice jams cause unpredictable flooding, making it difficult to determine flood management levels. Any facilities located within Eagle townsite would most likely be located within the 100 year floodplain. Other locations in the vicinity of the airport or along Taylor Highway would most likely be located outside of the 100 year floodplain.	Same as no action alternative

Resource Concerns	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B Preferred Alternative	Alternative C
Noise Management	On duty employees and preserve users would be subject to minimal disturbance from aircraft noise at the grass airstrip near the headquarters office and at the Eagle airport.	In Fairbanks, potential impacts area unknown, however, noise management would be considered when selecting a site location. Within Eagle, the impact would depend upon where the facilities would be located. Existing or new facilities at the present headquarters site or at the Eagle airport would be subject to the existing noise levels. If residences are constructed near the airport, employees and families could be subject to aircraft noise depending on the amount of aircraft use, resulting in an adverse impact. No impact would be expected if facilities or residences would be constructed within Eagle or along Taylor Highway.	Same as no action alternative

Resource Concerns	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B Preferred Alternative	Alternative C
Park Management	<p>Adverse effect. Preserve management and facilities would remain status quo. Inadequate office space and crowded working conditions would continue, with the preserve lacking 7,400 square feet of space for offices, visitor services, and maintenance. Visitor contact for interpretation and safety would be conducted from the small portable station at the headquarters site. A limited number of visitors would be contacted and visitor access concerns at the airstrip would continue. Law enforcement and emergency services would function in a satisfactory manner. Staff would enter the preserve via snow machine or boat without incurring additional transportation costs. The staffing and problems associated with the lack of suitable employee housing which meets standard building codes would continue.</p>	<p>Preserve management would change. The superintendent would be relocated to Fairbanks, most likely improving the coordination with other agencies. The NPS presence in Eagle would decrease, but would remain status quo within the preserve boundary. Adequate permanent facilities would be obtained or constructed in Eagle, alleviating the lack of space, crowded working conditions, and inadequate maintenance facilities. With an improved visitor contact station, the NPS would most likely reach a greater public for interpretation and safety purposes, since preserve visitors, as well as visitors in the town of Eagle would have the greater opportunity to locate and access NPS facilities. Law enforcement and emergency services would remain the same as the no action alternative. Staff would enter the preserve via aircraft, snow machine, or boat from Eagle, with minimal impact on preserve management. Residences would be provided for the preserve employees reducing their dependency on the limited housing market.</p>	<p>Preserve management would change. With Eagle becoming a district operation, the NPS presence in the town of Eagle would decrease. To maintain the existing presence within the preserve boundaries and enable the NPS to carry out the mandated responsibilities of ensuring protection of the resources and providing visitor services and safety, additional operational costs would be incurred primarily from transportation to and from the preserve. Additional office facilities would not be obtained or constructed in Eagle. With an improved visitor contact station at the present headquarters location, the NPS would be able to provide the visitors with more effective interpretation and safety information. The location and access concerns to the visitor center would remain. Law enforcement and emergency services would remain the same as the no action alternative. To enter the preserve, staff, supplies, and equipment would be transported to Circle by vehicle, then moved up-river by boat; to Eagle, by vehicle or aircraft, then down-river by boat; or to Coal Creek, by aircraft. Boats would be trailered to the preserve in the spring and returned to Fairbanks each fall. Residences would be provided for the preserve employees stationed in Eagle, reducing their dependency on the limited housing market.</p>

Resource Concerns	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B Preferred Alternative	Alternative C
Social Concerns- Eagle City	NPS generates activity from vehicle/boats that disturbs residents. The present activity level would continue to disrupt some citizens. Travel routes and speed requirements within Eagle for NPS staff, established to minimize community impacts, would be followed.	Decreasing the preserve staff within Eagle would reduce the activity level associated with these activities accordingly. Depending on the location of the other facilities, an additional reduction could occur. If most facilities are located along the Taylor Highway or at the airport, less activity within Eagle would occur. If facilities would be developed within Eagle an increase in activity and greater disturbance to residents is likely. New NPS travel routes would be developed.	A substantial decrease in NPS employees within Eagle would reduce the activity level from what is presently occurring. This alternative would minimize the disturbance that the NPS may have on the Eagle residents. The existing travel routes would most likely be used, but to a lesser extent.
Soils Management (Permafrost Concerns)	No impact. The effect permafrost has on the existing structures would not change.	Potential adverse impact for Fairbanks and Eagle. Permafrost could have an effect by damaging leased and/or new facilities and by increasing soil erosion. The effects of permafrost could be considered in project design and facilities could be located where permafrost risk is the lowest.	Same as preferred alternative

Resource Concerns	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B Preferred Alternative	Alternative C
Subsistence	Subsistence use would continue as present with the NPS operations having no adverse affect on subsistence resources.	Subsistence use does not apply to Fairbanks, since Fairbanks residents are not eligible for subsistence. Subsistence use for Eagle vicinity residents would not be restricted. Impacts to fish and wildlife populations by potential development would be negligible and these actions would most likely not result in a reduction of populations. The majority of subsistence use within GMU 20 occurs outside Eagle. Consequently, there would not be any restrictions on access to subsistence resources and also an increase in competition for subsistence resources within the region would not be expected. The continued implementation of provisions of ANILCA would mitigate any unforeseen increases in competition.	Same as preferred alternative.
Threatened and Endangered Species	No impact. Peregrines that nest near the headquarters appear habituated to human activity. Existing facilities are not located on the sites where rare plants are found.	There are not any adverse impacts expected within Fairbanks or Eagle. Peregrines located near Eagle appear habituated to human activity. Peregrines are not known to nest on land near the airport or along Taylor Highway, where potential construction could occur. Facility development is not proposed on sites where rare plant species are commonly found.	Same as preferred alternative

Resource Concerns	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B Preferred Alternative	Alternative C
Vegetation	<p>No impact. The natural vegetation communities at the existing headquarters site and the airport have been substantially altered by past human use. Facilities at these locations would remain status quo, new construction would not take place, therefore, vegetation would not be disturbed.</p>	<p>Within Fairbanks, adverse impacts are not expected since leased facilities would most likely be acquired. There may be an adverse impact dependent upon the location of the new or leased facilities proposed for Eagle. Construction within Eagle and at the existing headquarters site would result in no impact. Construction of office facilities and residences near the airport or along the Taylor Highway may alter up to 5 acres of upland forest vegetation. The impacts cannot be thoroughly assessed until construction sites and access routes are identified, however, impacts are expected to be minor.</p>	<p>No impact would occur from leasing employee housing units. If units are constructed, up to two acres of upland vegetation could be altered and potential impacts could occur. The amount of disturbance would depend upon the location of the units and if housing is constructed on uncleared land.</p>
Visual Quality	<p>No impact. The natural viewshed from Eagle would remain unimpaired.</p>	<p>Adverse impacts would not occur within Fairbanks. Leasing existing facilities in Eagle would have no impact. Within the Eagle area, construction of facilities and/or employee residences may have an adverse impact if design and location are not sensitive to the natural viewshed.</p>	<p>Same as preferred alternative</p>

Resource Concerns	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B Preferred Alternative	Alternative C
Wetlands Management	No impact. The existing facilities are not located on wetlands and new construction would not occur.	Acquiring leased facilities in Fairbanks would most likely not have an adverse impact. Construction in Fairbanks, however, depending on the location may result in impacts to wetlands. No impact would occur if buildings are leased within Eagle townsite and/or if new facilities were located on preferred sites where upland vegetation exists. Potential sites near Eagle that most likely are not wetlands, would be on the bluff area south of the airport or along Taylor Highway.	Same as preferred alternative
Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat and Management	Existing facilities are located within a developed area, as a result, impacts to wildlife species, including caribou and birds are not expected to occur. Preserve operations would not have an effect on any species of fish.	There are not any adverse impacts expected within Fairbanks as a result of the developed urban setting. Leasing or construction of facilities/residences in Eagle townsite would occur within a developed area and there would be no impact. Facility development at the Eagle airport or along Taylor Highway would occur on land substantially altered by past human activity. Construction could impact up to 5 acres of wildlife habitat. Potential impacts to wildlife species, including caribou and terrestrial birds from this construction (net habitat loss and disruption of movement and migratory paths) cannot be thoroughly assessed until site and construction acreage are defined. Impacts most likely would be minor. Impacts are not anticipated on migratory or resident bird species. Preserve operations would not have an effect on any fish species.	Same as preferred alternative, except the potential impacts would occur on an area up to two acres.

SUBSISTENCE EVALUATION

I. Introduction

This section was prepared to comply with Title VIII, Section 810 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). It summarizes the evaluations of potential restrictions to subsistence activities which could result from developing permanent NPS facilities in the communities of Fairbanks and Eagle.

Section 810 (a) of ANILCA states:

"In determining whether to withdraw, reserve, lease, or otherwise permit the use, occupancy, or disposition of public lands under any provision of law authorizing such actions, the head of the Federal agency having primary jurisdiction over such lands or his designee shall evaluate the effect of such use, occupancy, or disposition on subsistence uses and needs, the availability of other lands for the purposes sought to be achieved, and other alternatives which would reduce or eliminate the use, occupancy, or disposition of public lands needed for subsistence purposes. No such withdrawal, reservation, lease, permit, or other use, occupancy or disposition of such lands which would significantly restrict subsistence uses shall be effected until the head of such Federal agency-

1) gives notice to the appropriate State agency and the appropriate local committees and regional councils established pursuant to section 805;

2) gives notice of, and holds, a hearing in the vicinity of the area involved; and

3) determines that (A) such a significant restriction of subsistence uses is necessary, consistent with sound management principles for the utilization of public lands, (B) the proposed activity will involve the minimal amount of public lands necessary to accomplish the purposes of such use, occupancy, or disposition, and (C) reasonable steps will be taken to minimize adverse impacts upon subsistence uses and resources resulting from such actions.

II. The Evaluation Process

ANILCA created new units and additions to existing units of the National Park System in Alaska. Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve was created by section 201(10)

" for the following purposes, among others: to maintain the environmental integrity of the entire Charley River basin, including streams, lakes and other natural features, in its undeveloped natural condition for public benefit and scientific study; to protect habitat for, and populations of, fish and wildlife, including but not limited to the peregrine falcons and other raptorial birds, caribou, moose, Dall sheep, grizzly bears, and wolves; and in a manner consistent with the foregoing, to protect and interpret historical sites and events associated with the gold rush on the Yukon River and the geological and paleontological history and cultural prehistory of the area. . ."

SUBSISTENCE EVALUATION

II. The Evaluation Process (cont.)

Section 1313 of ANILCA states that a preserve "shall be administered and managed as a unit of the national park system in the same manner as a national park except that the taking of fish and wildlife for sport uses and subsistence uses, and trapping shall be allowed in a national preserve under applicable state and federal law and regulations". The potential for significant restriction must be evaluated for the proposed actions effect upon ". . .subsistence uses and needs, the availability of other lands for the purposes sought to be achieved and other alternatives which would reduce or eliminate the use."

III. Proposed Action On Federal Lands

For a description of the proposed action and alternatives, see Description of Alternatives section on page four.

IV. Affected Environment

For a description of the affected environment, see Affected Environment section on page eight.

V. Subsistence Uses and Needs Evaluation

To determine the potential impact on existing subsistence activities, three evaluation criteria were analyzed relative to existing subsistence resources which could be impacted.

The evaluation criteria are:

- the potential to reduce important subsistence fish and wildlife populations by a) reductions in numbers; b) redistribution of subsistence resources; or c) habitat losses;
- what effect the action might have on subsistence fisherman or hunter access;
- the potential for the action to increase fisherman, trapper or hunter competition for subsistence resources.

1) The potential to reduce populations:

Impacts to populations by the development should be negligible. There is no reason to believe that the proposed actions should result in a reduction of populations.

2) Restrictions of access:

The majority of subsistence use within GMU 20 occurs outside of Eagle. Consequently, there will be no restrictions on access to subsistence resources as a result of the proposed actions.

3) Increase in competition:

The majority of subsistence activities within GMU 20 occur outside of Fairbanks and Eagle. The proposed actions should not result in any increased competition for subsistence resources within the region. The continued implementation of provisions of ANILCA should mitigate any unforeseen increased competition.

SUBSISTENCE EVALUATION

VI. Availability of Other Lands

Eagle, Tok, and Circle have been proposed as headquarters development sites however, Fairbanks was selected at the preferred location. The general management plan for YUCH addresses the establishment of necessary facilities outside the preserve boundary. The NPS is directed to first seek to enter into memorandums of agreement with government or Native land owners for cooperative use of land and improvements.

VII. Alternatives Considered

The other alternatives considered include: (1) No Action - no facilities or functions would be located in Fairbanks and preserve headquarters would remain in Eagle; (2) Headquarters would be moved to Fairbanks and a district office would be remain in Eagle.

Other sites and plans were considered and found to be inappropriate to the area.

VII. Findings

This analysis concludes that the proposed action will not result in a significant restriction of subsistence uses

CONSTRUCTION COST ESTIMATES

	Alternative A ¹ No Action	Alternative B ² Preferred Alternative			Alternative C ²		
		Gross Construction Costs ³	Construction Planning Costs ⁴	Total Project Costs	Gross Construction Costs ³	Construction Planning Costs ⁴	Total Project Costs
Fairbanks:							
Headquarters Offices							
Maintenance Facility					987,000	188,000	1,175,000
Storage Building					216,000	59,000	275,000
Fenced Storage Yard					15,000	10,000	25,000
Aircraft Hangar					375,000	70,000	445,000
Subtotal Estimated Cost					1,593,000	327,000	1,920,000
Eagle:							
Administration Offices		1,175,000	225,000	1,400,000			
Visitor Contact Station		735,000	140,000	875,000	505,000	95,000	600,000
Maintenance Facility		987,000	188,000	1,175,000			
Storage Building		216,000	59,000	275,000			
Fenced Storage Yard		15,000	10,000	25,000			
Employee Housing		3,290,000	470,000	3,760,000 ⁶	1,373,000	92,000	1,465,000 ⁷
Subtotal Estimated Cost		6,418,000	1,092,000	7,510,000	1,878,000	187,000	2,065,000
Total Estimated Cost		\$ 6,418,000	\$ 1,092,000	\$ 7,510,000⁵	\$ 3,471,000	\$ 514,000	\$ 3,985,000⁵

¹ New construction would not occur under this alternative.

² Costs shown are based on the most probable scenario i.e. construct or lease. If leased facilities are available the estimates would change. Land acquisition costs are not included.

³ The gross construction costs includes a 31% gross-up of the net construction cost to cover contingencies and construction supervision.

⁴ Advance and project planning costs includes advance planning, site investigations, compliance, and construction documents.

⁵ First year cost includes interior construction and lease, Fairbanks @ \$90,000 Alt. B; \$350,000 @ Alt. C.

⁶ Four duplex housing units and a eight room seasonal dormitory.

⁷ One duplex housing unit.

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE COST CONSIDERATIONS

Alternative A No Action		Alternative B Preferred Alternative		Alternative C	
<p>With no new facilities in Eagle, there should be no increases in operations and maintenance costs. There may be some costs associated with escalating recruitment and retention problems because of grossly inadequate/substandard housing and a growing staff.</p>		<p>The new, expanded facilities in Eagle would increase costs associated with a larger maintenance staff, snow removal, grounds maintenance, solid waste disposal and water system operation, cyclic maintenance, and fuel storage facilities. Emergency generators would be needed for the new structures to prevent freeze-up during periodic winter power outages. Additional interpreters would be required to staff the new visitor center. With the staff split between Fairbanks and Eagle, there would be an increase in aircraft utilization to transport staff, supplies, and equipment between the two sites. An additional vehicle, and more clerical support, would be needed for the Fairbanks operation.</p>		<p>The construction/lease of a hangar in Fairbanks may result in an increase in utilities and general maintenance costs. The new, expanded facilities in Fairbanks would increase costs associated with a larger maintenance staff, snow removal, grounds maintenance, solid waste disposal, cyclic maintenance, and fuel storage facilities. There would be an increase in aircraft utilization to transport staff, supplies, and equipment between Fairbanks and Eagle. An additional aircraft and pilot could be required for the summer season. Additional vehicles would be required for transportation around Fairbanks and to Circle. Additional, more powerful boats would be needed for regular upstream travel from Circle into the preserve.</p>	
Estimated Annual Operations and Maintenance Cost					
Alternative A		Alternative B		Alternative C	
Fairbanks ¹	No cost	Fairbanks ¹	\$150,000	Fairbanks ¹	\$218,000
Eagle ¹	\$120,000	Eagle ¹	\$180,000	Eagle ¹	\$182,000 ³
Present Cost ²	\$650,000	Present Cost ²	\$650,000	Present Costs ²	\$650,000
Total Estimated Cost	\$770,000	Total Estimated Cost	\$980,000	Total Estimated Cost	\$1,050,000

¹ Shown are additional costs over the present annual operations and maintenance expense. Fairbanks cost includes the annual lease as shown on Construction Cost Estimates on page 26.

² Present operations and maintenance cost for the existing staff and facilities at Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve Headquarters.

³ Does not include an additional one time expense of \$222,000 for purchase of vehicles, larger boats, and fuel storage tanks.

MITIGATING MEASURES AND COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATIONS

The development concepts from this DCP will carry forward into an implementation process. If land acquisition, leasing or purchase of facilities, or construction is required the appropriate site selection process and environmental compliance would be completed. Specific mitigating measures identified within NEPA documents would be incorporated into the design specifications. Implementation of these measures would be insured by on-site construction supervision.

To comply with Executive Order 11988, "Floodplain Management," and Executive Order 11990, "Protection of Wetlands," 100-year flood elevations and wetlands could be mapped in the vicinity of proposed facilities before the site design phase. If the proposed facility locations are within the 100-year floodplain or a wetlands, or in lieu of a actual determination, assumed to be within either, further compliance with the requirements of the executive order would follow.

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act requires all federal agencies to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that any action authorized, funded, or carried out by the agency does not jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or critical habitat. National Park Service would consult with the US Fish and Wildlife Service regarding compliance with this act prior to any construction that could occur resulting from implementing an alternative.

Prior to any construction that may occur, the NPS would complete an evaluation and analysis of the potential effect on subsistence use with reference to ANILCA Title VIII, Section 810(a) Summary and Evaluation of Findings."

All facilities and programs developed would be accessible to disabled visitor and would be in compliance with the Architectural Barriers Act and the Rehabilitation Act.

The NPS will comply with the 1990 Programmatic Agreement for compliance with Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (Act). In compliance, the NPS will notify the Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation (ACHP) that the DCP is in preparation and NPS will seek comment. The following summarizes the compliance requirements for each alternative. The requirements under each alternative would be implemented if the respective alternative is selected.

The no action alternative would not be an undertaking, therefore, further action is not be required under Section 106 of the Act. The degradation of historic buildings, and impact to archeologic resources at the present facility may abrogate NPS responsibilities under Section 110 of the Act.

The preferred alternative would require the acquisition and/or lease of facilities in Fairbanks or Eagle. This would be an undertaking and is considered under the Programmatic Exclusion C.I.e., requiring NPS regional office review. Acquisition and leasing of buildings also is considered under Section 110 of the Act and the Public Buildings Cooperative Use Act of 1976. These sections require the consideration of using space within historic buildings in order to preserve buildings of historical or architectural significance.

The preliminary planning, site selection, design, and construction of new facilities in Fairbanks or Eagle proposed under the preferred alternative would require further consultation with the SHPO. Further consultation with the ACHP depends upon the determination of the effect for each undertaking.

Alternative C would have the same requirements as described above for NPS regional office, SHPO, and ACHP review as appropriate for each particular project.

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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Eagle Development Concept Plan
Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve

The National Park Service (NPS) has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) evaluating the Eagle Development Concept Plan (DCP), which was prepared to determine the most suitable location for the Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve headquarters and other preserve operations.

A public review of the EA was conducted for the project from May 28, 1993 through July 31, 1993. Sixty-three comments were received, mostly from individuals residing in communities near the preserve. A majority of the commentors preferred a decreased NPS presence in Eagle, including the minimal construction of new facilities.

The three alternatives analyzed in the DCP/EA included:

1) Alternative A (no action); 2) Alternative B (preferred), the headquarters would be moved to Fairbanks, most of the preserve staff would remain in Eagle and adequate support facilities would be developed in Eagle; and 3) Alternative C, most of the preserve staff would be located in Fairbanks with less facility development in Eagle.

The analysis in the DCP/EA formed the basis for the decision to select Alternative B and move the headquarters (including the superintendent, administrative officer, and other personnel necessary to support the administrative function of the preserve) to Fairbanks. This action will result in the following benefits: 1) the superintendent will have the option to determine the future duty stations of preserve staff based on where their work can best be accomplished, 2) new or improved facilities consisting of administrative offices, visitor contact station, maintenance/storage facilities and employee housing will be constructed or leased at Eagle to adequately accommodate preserve users and staff, and 3) the superintendent will be better able to coordinate with other agencies.

The scope of the analysis focused on conceptual planning for preserve operations and associated facilities. The NPS has determined the preferred alternative can be implemented with no significant adverse effect to the natural and cultural resources as documented by the EA. The development concepts from the DCP will carry forward into the implementation process. If land acquisition, leasing or purchase of facilities, or construction is required, the appropriate site selection process and environmental compliance would be completed. The subsequent projects would incorporate mitigative measures, as necessary, to minimize environmental impacts. The proposed action complies with the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic

Preservation Act and Executive Orders 11988 and 11990. There would be no significant restriction of subsistence activities as documented by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, Title VIII, Section 810(a) Summary Evaluation and Findings.

I find that the proposed action does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1508.9), an environmental impact statement will not be prepared for the project.

Recommended:

Paul W. Anascoly
Superintendent, Yukon-Charley
Rivers National Preserve

07/20/94
Date

Approved:

John W. Kowalski
Regional Director, Alaska Region

8/26/94
Date

