FRIENDS OF KENNICOTT, INC.
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Friends of Kennicott Vision 2000

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes a recommended strategy and vision for involvement of Friends of Kennicott and other nonprofit entities in the management of Kennecott National Historic Landmark - the most visited site in our nation's largest national park.

Friends of Kennicott will work with NPS and other local nonprofits on projects that further its mission in the Kennecott National Historic Landmark: to assist the National Park Service's efforts in preserving and managing the historic resources and landscape of the Kennecott National Historic Landmark in a way that maintains the character of Kennicott and McCarthy for the visiting public and residents alike.

Over the next decade, Friends will focus on the renovation and reuse of selected historic buildings in Kennicott. To undertake projects over the coming decade, Friends of Kennicott will hire a professional staff, diversify its board, work effectively with the local Kennicott-McCarthy communities, develop a strong program of earned income, and develop its fundraising ability.

BACKGROUND

This report follows on the heels of the Partnership Management Strategy for the Kennecott National Historic Landmark, prepared by Mike Loso in June, 1999. Preparation of the Strategy was funded by a 1998 grant from the State Office of History and Archaeology and the NPS. This follow up report more specifically addresses the actions and intentions of Friends of Kennicott. A key shift from the 1999 Strategy and this Year 2000 Vision document is the replacement of the proposed Kennicott Coalition concept with a direct commitment by Friends of Kennicott to involve the local community and other locally based non-profits in Friends efforts. These commitments are detailed in this report.

KENNICOTT'S FUTURE

A Shared Vision

We stand at a valuable moment of opportunity; a surprising degree of consensus has emerged in the vision of Kennicott's future.

This is an exciting time in Kennicott. Among the growing ranks of persons and organizations interested in Kennicott, there is substantial agreement on many elements of a collective vision for Kennicott's future. This shared vision will provide a strong foundation for the work that follows - a way to evaluate our plans and our actions. On the basis of extensive public meetings, private interviews, and circulated questionnaires, it appears that most interested parties envision a future in which Kennicott:

* ...is stabilized to prevent deterioration of historic structures or artifacts and to make them available to the public.
* ...is managed with a "light touch" in which projects are undertaken in small steps, at modest costs, with minimal intervention.
* ...is not just a ghost town, but also is a place that reflects the vitality, creativity, and community spirit of today's residents.
* ...retains the slow pace, quiet, and spaciousness that foster contemplation and individual reflection.
* ...is part of a larger community in which residents act both individually and collectively to guide the future of the area.
* ...contributes to a strong, reasonably diverse economy that includes locally owned and operated businesses, community-based nonprofits, and traditions of barter and subsistence.
* ...protects and honors small-town values: safety, cooperation, self-sufficiency, and personal freedom.
* ...is a place where tourism is allowed to evolve within the capacity of the community, rather than a place where external intervention and control accelerate growth.
* ...is seen by local residents and visitors alike in its true context: a remote outpost of civilization in the midst of an enormous mountain wilderness.

Mission and Operations

Kennecott National Historic Landmark (KNHL) should be managed to protect the cultural and natural resources of this historic mining district and the surrounding glacial landscape; and to provide a safe, educational, and rewarding experience for the area's visitors and residents.

Before addressing the question of who should manage various activities at the KNHL, we must ask what those activities might be. What actions should be taken in the KNHL to achieve the shared vision outlined above? These questions will be addressed in the the National Park Service Interim Management Plan for the Landmark. The plan will outline specific management actions

and physical improvements necessary to stabilize conditions and support the visitor experience over the next five years. The following illustrates Friends of Kennicott's recommended management actions, largely based upon public comments received by Friends of Kennicott and the National Park Service in a variety of public meetings.

Friends recommends this Mission Statement for the Kennecott National Historic Landmark: ...to protect the cultural and natural resources of this historic mining district and the surrounding glacial landscape; and to provide a safe, educational, and rewarding experience for the area's visitors and residents.

Operations - Interpretation

* The KNHL should continue to be a place of self-discovery for the visitor. Stabilization and maintenance of historic buildings should allow, as much as possible, for self-guided tours and individual exploration. This can be facilitated by continued availability of roving NPS rangers, high quality interpretation, the Museum's walking tour guide, and improved signs/exhibits.
* Historical information should explicitly address the historical context of Kennicott: its spatial connections to McCarthy, Chitina, and Cordova, and its temporal connections to the pre- and post-mining eras.
* KNHL interpretive activities in Kennicott should grow to reflect the diverse interests of the visiting public. These activities may include exhibits, short tours, lectures, and multi-day residential programs that cover geology, glaciology, natural history, and the humanities. Ideally, interpretive programs will be operated by one or more local nonprofit organizations.
* KNHL interpretive displays in Kennicott should complement, rather than compete with, the Historical Museum in McCarthy.
* Historical tours and residential educational programs should ultimately be available through private providers. Within the constraints of visitor safety, historical tours might eventually encompass the townsite and portions of the underground mines. Educational programs could encompass the cultural, social, physical, and natural assets of the Valley. Providers should be selected that maximize the skills and assets of the local community before resorting to nonlocal entities.
* Interpretation should explicitly address the natural as well as the cultural landscape, providing information about the evolving glacial, periglacial, forest, and alpine environments in and around the KNHL.
* The cultural landscape should seek to portray KNHL in the temporal and geographic context of the Copper River Valley and should include stories from multiple perspectives.

Operations - Visitation

NPS, nonprofit, and commercial activities in the KNHL should, to the extent possible, be explicitly phased to occur over an extended period that meets rather than exceeds the demands of park visitors. Disproportionately large investments that demand increased visitation to finance or justify them should be avoided. The relationship between local businesses and nonprofits should be mutually supportive rather than competitive.

Operations - Safety/Security

* A fire protection/safety program for the entire Kennicott area should be instituted as soon as possible. This program might include a cooperatively maintained water system, volunteer fire department, and acquisition of fire extinguishers, fire protection and first aid equipment.
* Security and site protection should be accomplished as much as possible through education and prevention rather than through law enforcement, respecting local traditions of personal freedom and individual responsibility.

Operations - Land Use

* Land use in the KNHL mill site should be conceptually divided into two zones divided by National Creek. The area south of National Creek should be developed as a mixed-use area emphasizing high-quality visitor services (lodging, information, education, and interpretation). A mix of appropriately scaled, locally based commercial businesses, nonprofit organizations, and the NPS would be ideally suited to provide these services. Publicly owned lands north of the creek should be maintained in a state of arrested decay, minimizing development that detracts from the sense of an abandoned ghost town. Throughout the KNHL, all activities should endeavor to maintain the historic integrity of the area.
* Owners of private inholdings in the mill site portion of the KNHL should be respected as integral participants in the Kennicott landscape. They should be permitted to develop their lands in conformance with the covenants and decisions of the Architectural Control Committee. Local landowners should be encouraged to sit on this committee.
* Adaptive reuse of NPS-owned historic buildings by NPS and locally-based nonprofit organizations should be limited to a designated "maximum adaptive reuse zone" including the company store, meat house, west bunkhouse, schoolhouse, and recreation hall. Adaptive reuse of all these buildings should not necessarily be assumed. Individual proposals to reuse these b buildings should be considered on a project-specific basis with community input.
* Camping should not be allowed in the KNHL mill site area. The current policy of allowing camping only north of Jumbo Creek or in the Bonanza Bowl should be continued.

Operations - Artifact Treatment

* Artifacts should be left in place unless they are out of historical context or a hazard to public safety. Trash and debris should be cleaned up and removed.
* Curatorial inventory and storage of historic artifacts should be done in cooperation with the McCarthy-Kennicott Historical Museum.

Operations - Vegetation Management

Selective vegetation clearing to open up paths and views is appropriate, but most lands in the KNHL should be left to continue their individual courses of primary or secondary succession. These processes of revegetation are direct responses to both glacial retreat and human activities. In both cases, they are examples of natural processes that should for the most part be protected and interpreted for park visitors.

Operations - Administration

* The National Park Service should retain lead responsibility for general management activities in Kennicott with an ongoing and explicit effort to partner with locally based nonprofit organizations, commercial businesses, and the local community in appropriate and mutually beneficial circumstances.
* Working on behalf of a variety of groups and organizations, a single nonprofit organization (Friends of Kennicott) should take the lead role in assisting NPS management and preservation efforts in the KNHL.
* Bidding, concession, partnership, hiring, and occupancy in the Kennecott National Historic Landmark should in all cases, to the extent possible, give preference to local persons, groups, and organizations.

Operations - Infrastructure

* Opportunities should be sought for communally shared solutions to issues of sanitation, safe water supply, and power. Whether provided by NPS, commercial entities, nonprofit organizations, or some mixture of these and other entities, there will be a widespread benefit to residents and visitors alike if such infrastructure needs can be met with cooperative solutions that are compatible with the community size and style.
* Innovative technologies should be used and showcased in the National Historic Landmark. Kennicott's remoteness has always encouraged self-sufficiency and a consequently high level of technological innovation. Throughout this century, this innovation has tended towards a quirky mix of old-timey and cutting edge alternative technologies--from horse drawn wagons, pelton wheels, and ammonia leaching to dog sleds, solar power, and composted waste. This history of self-sufficiency, innovation, and alternative solutions should be continued and interpreted.

Operations - Access/Circulation

* Trail information, maintenance, and signage should be a primary function in the KNHL. Though it is primarily a historic site, the downtown area is also a hub for three of the most-hiked trails in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park - the Root Glacier Trail, the Bonanza Mine Trail, and the old Carriage Road to McCarthy. Because these trails provide remarkably easy access to three important natural environments (the glacial, alpine, and forest environments, respectively), conditions of their use and maintenance should remain a priority in park planning.
* All possible steps should be used to minimize the need for private motorized vehicle use in and around the KNHL townsite. While maintaining rights of motorized access for residents and businesses, emphasis should be placed on the development and use of pedestrian access and public transit. Motorized access between Kennicott and McCarthy is best suited to the old railroad right-of-way, leaving use of the old Carriage Road for bicycles and pedestrians. Construction of an additional walking trail between Kennicott and McCarthy along the current glacier margin should be considered.

PARTNERS

The Case for Partnership

In December, 1994, Friends of Kennicott presented a planning document to the National Park Service specifically advocating cooperative management of the Kennicott site by NPS and a locally based nonprofit organization. At that time, Friends of Kennicott had just completed over $500,000 in emergency building repairs at Kennicott, clearly demonstrating the ability of a private nonprofit organization to raise funds and administer them at a significant cost savings compared to the federal government. This fiscal efficiency was touted as the primary incentive for a public/private partnership:

Benefits of this partnership approach:
* Combines the efficiency of a private organization with the standards and public accountability of the National Park Service.
* Builds on the established record of Friends of Kennicott to efficiently use state and Congressionally appropriated funds in cooperation with the Park Service.
* Enables the Park Service to meet its responsibilities at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park/Preserve and to the National Historic Landmark at minimum cost.

The argument was apparently convincing. This idea - public/private partnership - has successfully endured the many long years of negotiation. In the course of appropriating $1.5 million dollars towards the acquisition, Senator Ted Stevens' staff clearly expressed their opinion: "The National Park Service is directed to operate and maintain Kennecott through a nonprofit entity in cooperation with the State of Alaska."

In public meetings held at Kennicott June 10-11, 1998, ten local citizens, private business owners, and representatives of locally and regionally based nonprofit organizations all agreed on the basic advantages of a partnership approach. At another public meeting on September 9, 1998, local residents were asked whether the NPS alone, the community alone, or an equal partnership should manage Kennicott in the future. Seventeen out of 23 residents chose some form of equal partnership. Moreover, recent park management has consistently stated a hope that local nonprofits will take a substantial role in assisting the management of Kennicott.

Fiscal efficiency alone cannot explain the enthusiasm of such a diverse group; what are all the advantages of a public/private partnership? A public/private partnership in Kennicott:
* ...combines the efficiency of the private sector with the standards and public accountability of the National Park Service.
* ...expands available capital by combining NPS base funding with the fundraising capacity of a private tax-exempt organization.
* ...provides for local participation in operation and decision making.
* ...provides opportunities to work with other regional, statewide, and national organizations on

issues relating to Kennicott.
* ...builds the community's sense of empowerment and internal cohesion.
* ...ensures, through enlightened self-interest, that activities in Kennicott protect and enhance the cultural and natural assets of the valley.
* ...bolsters the community's internal capacity to provide visitor services.

There may also be drawbacks to a partnership approach. On March 25, 1998, members of the Friends of Kennicott's "structure committee" released a short report investigating the pros and cons of partnering with the National Park Service in Kennicott. After citing many possible advantages, they listed several potential problems with a public/private partnership in Kennicott. A partnership might: a) produce conflicts of interest in the Kennicott business community requiring a major change in the boards of directors of locally based nonprofits; b) preclude involved nonprofits from acting as local advocacy groups; c) require a lot of fundraising and administrative work from a very small volunteer and membership base; and d) expose the nonprofit boards of directors to potential liability concerns.

To respond to these valid points, Friends of Kennicott modified its mission statement to clarify that it was "assisting" the Park Service, rather than taking on a full management role. Other clarifications, statements of intent, and structural changes to the board were developed during the winter of 1999-2000, and are listed here:

* Friends will focus exclusively on the Kennecott National Historic Landmark. The organization is not trying to duplicate the broader role of the McCarthy Area Council or any other group set up for general local governance purposes.

* Friends will further refine its board to improve communication with community members and other community organizations.

* Friends recognizes that the National Park Service retains the responsibility for making major management decisions about the Landmark.

* Friends recognizes that what happens in Kennicott affects the entire local area. Consequently, Friends also recognizes that the Park Service will seek input from all local organizations and individuals. Friends is also interested in what other local organizations and individuals think as it makes its own internal decisions. Friends of Kennicott expects to be an important point of contact with the NPS; however it is not responsible for packaging all local views for the NPS. The strength of Friends' voice will depend on the effectiveness of the organization.

Therefore, examples of acceptable Friends of Kennicott activities might include:
* Assist or implement NPS management decisions, for example:
* under contract with NPS, lay out a trail which NPS wants, including working with local landowners and trail users on specific siting or vegetation clearing criteria.

* work with NPS on a detailed plan for Recreation Hall adaptive reuse.
* Influence NPS management decisions, for example:
* make recommendations to NPS about the style, type and numbers of tours to protect the character of the tours and the area, and recommend operator criteria.
* if NPS wishes to entertain other adaptive reuse projects, then Friends could make recommendations about nuts and bolts, such as how many buildings to be reused, what kind of use, appropriate types of users, style or theme of reconstruction.

Examples of inappropriate direct management roles are:
* making decisions about who gets to operate tours.
* soliciting bids on construction contracts.

FRIENDS OF KENNICOTT

Mission

Friends of Kennicott has expanded its mission statement to embrace connections between the Landmark, neighboring lands, and the community at large. The current mission says:

> *Friends of Kennicott is a locally based organization established to assist the National Park Service's efforts in preserving and managing the historic resources and landscape of the Kennecott National Historic Landmark in a way that maintains the character of Kennicott and McCarthy for the visiting public and residents alike.*

Over time, this expanded mission statement will allow Friends to do more than just rehabilitate historic structures. For example, to stimulate greater use of alternative and shared transportation, Friends might:

1) work with local shuttle companies, MAC, and NPS to construct improved shuttle "waiting stations" at Kennicott, McCarthy, and the footbridge;
2) work with local shuttle companies and the Chamber of Commerce to encourage greater visitor awareness of available shuttle services;
3) raise funds to subsidize unprofitable shuttle schedules (i.e. late evenings or shoulder seasons);
4) work with NPS to build or improve bicycle and pedestrian trails linking McCarthy, the glacier, the footbridge area, and Kennicott.

This freedom to act on issues that are not strictly "within the box" has proven very valuable to Friends organizations in other parks (Friends of Acadia and the Rocky Mountain National Park Association, for example) that share Kennicott's strong connection between park and private lands.

Development of Friends of Kennicott

To undertake projects over the coming decade, Friends of Kennicott will need to hire a professional staff, diversify its board, work effectively with the Kennicott-McCarthy communities, develop a strong program of earned income, and work closely with the National Park Foundation to develop its fundraising ability.

Friends of Kennicott has reinvented itself to effectively assist the National Park Service in managing Kennicott. This role demands that Friends develop the organizational strength to provide financial, administrative, and programmatic assistance to the Park Service.

Staff

The most substantial change required in Friends of Kennicott's previous organization is the addition of a professional staff. The volunteer board (which has already accomplished so much in that capacity) cannot undertake this expanded mission alone. Initially, one or more part-time employees should be hired with primary responsibilities for organizational development and fundraising. Friends has benefited greatly from the staff support initiated in the fall of 1999.

Board of Directors

To strengthen the Boards' commitment to the local community the Board has refined its structure to include the following elements:

* At least 51% of the board should be local McCarthy/Kennicott residents. Local residency is somewhat subjective and the board will retain the final determination about individual board member residency if questions arise. Criteria used by the board to help determine primary residency may include land ownership, voter registration, vehicle registration, permanent mailing address.
* At least two seats would be reserved for representatives of other community-based membership organizations. Interested locally-based organizations may nominate a representative to the Friends board prior to annual elections or whenever a vacancy exists. Friends will consider such nominations in the context of maintaining a majority of local residents, and seeking board members who work well with others, and are committed to Friends' purposes.
* Any Friends board member who also represents another local organization has a special responsibility to help with two-way communication and information exchange between the organizations.
* Any Friends board member representing another local organization should recognize that when acting on the Friends board their first priority is to Friends.

Over time, Friends of Kennicott will also be compelled to diversify the board. It must be recognized that the board, along with its professional staff, is the single most important group in determining the degree to which the organization succeeds in achieving its mission and stated

objectives. In assuming the role of primary private fund raiser at Kennicott, Friends commits to building the board's ability to raise money for accomplishing its goals. This will include new board members with fundraising background, financial resources, and personal connections to potential donors. This can be a gradual process, and it should be done with care to ensure that new board members share the vision for Kennicott's future.

Projects

The first project will be renovation of the Recreation Hall for use as a community center. It should be emphasized that the reuse of subsequent structures by Friends, NPS, and other organizations will be consciously phased to meet (and not exceed) the natural pace of visitor growth. Though the stabilization schedule will probably in any case be constrained by funding, the pace of building renovation and use should in part be dependent upon visitation levels. For this reason, a detailed time line of subsequent projects is not presented for subsequent renovation activities. For the foreseeable future, it is likely that many publicly owned buildings will be further stabilized to "arrest decay", but will not be modified for purposes other than viewing.

Funding

Friends of Kennicott should not work alone to tackle the fundraising challenge associated with such a substantial collection of deteriorated historic structures. Though Friends will be an active fund raiser with respect to the KNHL, it can and should seek substantial assistance from other organizations, including the National Park Service (challenge grants, base funding for stabilization work, logistical support); National Park Foundation (membership in the "Park Partners Initiative," expressly designed to assist local nonprofit organizations with development of their fundraising capacity); Alaska Conservation Foundation (support for community based sustainable economic development); and the National Trust for Historic Preservation (fundraising and marketing programs for historic structures).

While working on project-specific fundraising, Friends of Kennicott will simultaneously need to support its basic operations. Professional staff salaries and administrative expenses, though much lower than capital expenses associated with building renovation and maintenance, are typically more difficult to fund and more critical to the long-term stability and success of nonprofit organizations. To ensure long-term success, Friends must design and implement a solid program of earned income (income derived from product sales and services, rather than from donations and grants). Ideally, earned income will provide greater than 50% of Friends' basic operating expenses on an annual basis. Membership dues, individual donations, and a fixed fraction of the endowment would comprise the remainder.