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From Copper to Conservation: The Politics of Wilderness, Cultural and Natural Resources in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve

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From Copper to Conservation: The Politics of Wilderness, Cultural, and Natural Resources in Wrangell-Saint Elias National Park and Preserve

by

Margot Natalie Higgins

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Committee in charge:

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Abstract

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The majority of literature on parks and people has criticized U.S park establishment for kicking people out of protected areas (Jacoby 2003, Chase 1987, Cronon 1996). The consequences of imposing the U.S. model for parks and wilderness has most often been examined in the context of under resourced countries focusing on the impact of native societies within that landscape (Neumann 1998, Solnit, 2000, Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008, Dowie 2009). My dissertation extends prior park scholarship by examining the opposite: What happens when people are allowed to remain living within a designated wilderness area and national park in a "first world" setting? In 1980 the National Park Service began the trials of managing what historian Theodore Catton referred to as "inhabited wilderness." Congress passed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) establishing more than 100 million acres of federal land in Alaska as new or expanded conservation areas, doubling the national park system and tripling the amount of land designated as wilderness. The ANILCA compromise set the legislative framework for federal land managers to balance the national interest in Alaska's scenic and wildlife resources with the acknowledgement of Alaska's distinctive rural way of life, legally recognizing the ongoing interaction between people and nature. Using Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve as a case, I examine the history and politics of wilderness management, natural and cultural resource management, including subsistence. Combing approaches in political ecology and environmental history, I evaluate whose voices have had the most influence in shaping these policies, and the extent to which various park residents have benefitted from an "inhabited wilderness." Informal interviews, participatory observation, and archival research, examine these processes. Employing an analytic strategy that evaluates the interaction of the local and national narratives about national park management, I pay particular attention to how narratives have changed over time. Implications for managers, and future research are discussed.

Acknowledgements

Due to my last minute hire as a visiting professor at Macalester, my dissertation was extremely rushed toward the end. With thoughtful and constructive feedback from everyone, my committee has been incredibly helpful to me in my effort to push this through quite quickly and in a productive way. Each one of them has been kind, generous, inspiring, and incredibly supportive of me – particularly following a major health challenge that has come up for me in the past couple of years. I am most grateful for all of the attention you have offered.

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Table of Contents

Preface

My PhD advisor Dr. Carolyn Finney frequently asked me, “What brings you to do this work and what do you bring to this research?” Raised in New York City, I first visited Alaska in my mid-twenties for an environmental advocacy job to campaign against natural gas development within the districts in and around Anchorage. Identifying as an environmental activist, I esteemed the remote wilderness ventures conveyed by John Muir, Bob Marshall, and others. I imagined the remote wildlife encounters experienced on dog sled by Olaus and Mardie Murie in the 1920s: caribou, bear, wolf, and trumpeter swan, among other species. Their experience in Arctic Alaska impassioned the Muries to become founding members and leaders of the Wilderness Society. Mardi Murie famously went on to be a leading political advocate on behalf of the legislation to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil development, testifying in Congress well into her late 90s.

Years of leading college students in the backcountry of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, reinforced my notions of wilderness as a place with vast spaces of uninhabited, trail-less, pristine terrain. I was particularly influenced by my time working for the Sierra Club on behalf of land and wildlife protection through the federally mandated Endangered Species and Wilderness Acts. When I showed up on ranches as a grizzly bear protection advocate, however, I was often shunned (sometimes gently and other times more aggressively) for my inexperience, liberal arts education, urban background and clear disconnect from experiencing the land and interacting with it. I recall a hunter in Wyoming who suggested that the prevention of ranching, oil, gas, and timber development in the northern Rockies was resting on the back of the grizzly bear. He was not opposed to the protection of bears. In fact, he did not support hunting them due to their small population and low reproductive capacity in the lower-48. But he was critical of the tactics used by the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, and others. These traditional preservation approaches did as much harm as good.

Reflecting on that interaction today, I am far more aware that there was a great deal of truth in that statement. While many environmental thinkers of the wilderness movement troubled such concepts as private property and progress, they have often reinforced the same dynamics they claimed to oppose. Significant contradictions were encompassed in their campaigns. In particular, they supported a notion, that often has been debunked, about the separation of people and wilderness. These environmentalists also gave rise to a large literature of critical scholarship about the “Trouble with Wilderness” (Cronon, 1996).

Coinciding with the preservation of movement of the 1970s, in Alaska an alternate form of wilderness has been established – that which allowed for the habitation of park residents and the continuation of their livelihoods. Due to the unique compromise of the Alaska Native Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) a different form of “environmentalism” has been maintained and

continues to evolve. This is a hands-on embodied experience that has been shaped by living *within* wilderness and the continuation of distinct rural livelihoods. This practice is conducted not only by the people who promoted the establishment of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve –one of the largest contiguous wilderness areas on the planet – but also to some extent by those who sharply opposed this designation in the 1970s. Local governing officials have sometimes adopted these livelihoods as well. While the majority of literature on parks and people has criticized park establishment for kicking people out of protected areas (Jacoby 2003, Chase 1987, Cronon 1996), my dissertation looks at the opposite: what happens when people are allowed to remain living within a designated wilderness area and national park. In this dissertation I present a less adverse and declensionist story about the relationship between people and parks, local and national governance.

Life in an inhabited wilderness is an experience I could not properly imagine without personally engaging in the place itself. Removed from the Internet, my days were often composed by long moments of silence. At other times, there was intense, close human engagement due to the distance of living far from other human populations. It is still customary for people to stop by without calling or texting. They often carry something to eat, a musical instrument or an urgent request for help. Floods blow out footbridges and heavy rain pours through the walls. I encountered moose on long bike rides in between interviews, hauled my water a quarter of a mile from the stream to my cabin that had been constructed decades prior with hand peeled logs. I attempted, sometimes unsuccessfully, to power my voice recorder with a small roll up solar panel. One quiet evening, alone, while weeding in the garden, I locked eyes with a lynx for what seemed like an hour.

In a place with so few people, you might learn to live a few steps removed from the global economy. It is possible here, to exist off the grid and to drink water straight from a stream. It is necessary to adjust your life to the intense cycles of the midnight sun and the drawn out dark days of winter. People quickly construct bird houses in the spring to accommodate swallows – with high hopes that they will devour mosquitoes. Park residents treasure the taste of black bears and grouse fed by berries. They long for the salty flavor of herring eggs laid on seaweed, raw sockeye salmon straight from the Copper River, or even salmon eye balls. These foods take on new meaning when they are seasonal, consumed in their most alive form, instead of behind the freezer counter. Rusty trucks, copper barrels and blazo cans are a common site in the Wrangells, as are bear scratched weather-scabbed cabins, built with hand peeled logs and roofs covered with lichen and moss as insulation. Residents seem to be continually in a state of fixing things and reviving outmoded parts: they repair windows busted by bears and avalanches, patch holes that voles have incised in their walls, tinker with automobile parts from the 1950s. They heartily axe multiple cords of wood to heat them through the long cold season ahead. (It is not unusual for temperatures to drop well below zero, though that seems to be happening less

frequently these days, as plant ranges shift, ice break-up arrives earlier, and heavy winter parkas are pulled out later in the fall than in the past.)

The stories that non-native residents of Wrangell-St. Elias tell often recall a recent history that seems familiar; they express nostalgia for the lifestyle their great grandparents and even their parents might have lived. And yet, for many Americans, such attachments require no small amount of interpretation.

A visitor of the Park might ask as I often did in my research: "How have you managed to stick it out in this remote park? And why?" The first of those questions, the *how*, initiates a long but tangible conversation about such subjects as the severe weather, hard times, deep values, ingenuity, luck, adaptability, concern for the land, government policies (the despised ones and the depended-upon ones), global markets, and the healthy aspects of growing, gathering and hunting your own food. There is the practicality of storing one's root vegetables in a root cellar, pickling your garden vegetables, and smoking salmon so that it will last until the next season.

The second question— *why?*—is not so neatly answerable. Some people cite close-knit communities and deep, long-term relationships. Others have told me, "It's an amazing way to raise children." Said one woman, "it is a place where we are limited by our environment and we learn to live with fewer comforts." A college professor explained, "I like living in a community where the teenage boy in the leather jacket also has an intimate knowledge of birdsongs." For some residents, living in the Park is about confronting the scale of our small human lives: "It is possible in this place to be right in the face of huge physical biological geological change happening in multiple contexts at once," a woman said. Another commented, "This place is high energy. It feeds off the glacier that literally spills into this community. Many people like myself are drawn to that. Some go crazy."

For a man who has been living in the area since the 1970s, there is transcendental component to spending time in this environment: "We created a secular monastery, a place of spiritual quest and intent. We wanted to live with the snow and ice as it comes, September through April, especially when nothing else was going on. For us it was just snow and ice. We lived with the slight change in the wind, humidity, crystal in snow. These marked the changes from one day to the next."

But for some of the Park's most tenacious residents, the only articulable answer is seemingly circular – a reference back to the place itself. From the large kitchen window in the house he designed "thriftily" and constructed for its "functionality," an 81 year old who is the longest resident of one park community repeatedly told me: "I like getting up and looking at what I get to look at every morning." He referred several times that summer to his experience spotting black and grizzly bears, seasonal song birds, a moose and its calves – and a lynx here and there.

Throughout my study I have found that residents continually adjust to new forms of circumstances with adaptive behavior and an evolving sense of local knowledge, that falls outside of targeted management regimes. In the human communities of the park there is a conglomeration of Native and non-Native Alaskans, old timers, new comers, people who are there to party, hike and worship. There are people who hunt, trap and fish for subsistence. There are those that lead clients for trophies. There are climbing guides, river guides, field course instructors, federal government officials, permanent residents, second home-owners, and tourists, among others. There are a small number of long-term local park employees that have taken on local practices, and embodied local experiences in the park. On numerous occasions I watched a wide conglomeration of these people, ranging from the federal and state government to predominantly anti-government individuals, sift through complex management decision together.

I hope to capture the lifestyles, mountain and subsistence culture of park residents that are becoming increasingly rare in Alaska's rapid urbanization, social and environmental change, in an age that is more wired and connected to the global economy – before these ways of living might wink out and perhaps become largely forgotten.

Figure 1. Reviewing my field notes. Photo courtesy of Jason Henderson

Methods

The data for this research has the following appearance: slanted, hand written notes from over 125 interviews, conversations with key informants and chance meetings with strangers. There are 27-page long typed transcriptions, dusty memoirs of former park residents in journals, calendars, and government documents. There are many scribbled memos on the back of Cliff Bar wrappers and receipts. The information that composes this dissertation is derived primarily from over 125 interviews and participant observation, as well as published ethnographic and historical literature and archival materials. Additionally, I have lived and conducted research in the park region and have drawn upon some of my support from personal experiences, unpublished materials, photographs, community art and writing.

I visited 19 of the 23 resident zone communities in Wrangell-St. Elias during my fieldwork from 2010-13. To understand the livelihoods and values of Park residents, I found it was especially useful to talk with people informally while they were engaged in their usual daily activity, such as cooking, fixing a roof, putting up an electric bear fence, or preparing strips of local salmon for the brining and smoking process. I focused on the tactile, well-practiced, hands-on experience of Park residents, in addition to listening to their stories. While conducting an interview, I would also try to take notes about what people ate, what books they read, how many pets they had, how many hunting trophies they had on their walls, what subsistence activities they engaged in or what things they shopped for at Costco, how they interacted with neighbors, and what it was like to

access their property. Was there a trail, was it muddy, dusty, steep, easily accessible to the public? Was this intentional? What changes did they speak about in relation to these activities and belongings?

This approach was intended to help me meet people on their terms and adjust to local ideas of productive work, by watching and learning rather than confining them with a list of formal structured questions. I also became more familiar with why people were drawn to a livelihood in rural Alaska, what values drove them to settle in this area, and how they perceived their interaction with the human and non-human environment over time. Respondents often highlighted social and spatial variation when comparing rural Alaska to urban settings and most notably comparing rural Alaska to the lower forty-eight. This signified perceived differences in lifestyle, values, and self-sufficiency and often conveyed an indirect message of righteousness or superiority over these other populations.

Also contributing to my effort to better relate to local experience, I attempted to follow local practices, especially during my first field season when I spent my entire summer largely in the same place within the McCarthy-Kennicott communities. Loaded with groceries, my mountain bike, a small roll-up solar panel and a 12-volt car battery, I arrived in May at the home of Jim Edwards. At eighty-years-old that year, Jim was the longest living member in the community, having first arrived in the area in 1953. Though he is nearly deaf, he offered a wealth of stories. On Jim's property I was offered a small cabin named "Beaver Creek" after the beaver dam that was discovered when he purchased the land in 1973. Situated in a dense predominantly white spruce forest, the cabin sits next to the now dry creek bed that once flowed through the property. Like many residences in remote areas of the Park, the cabin has no running water or electricity, but inside there were two propane lights, a vintage wood stove that was "rescued" from the remains of the Kennecott mining days, a one burner propane stove, and a root cellar. Left in meticulous condition by a Swiss couple that had cared for the place and lived there year round, there was hardly a mouse or vole dropping to be found when I moved in – a sure sign of a well-maintained rural cabin. I took notes and photos to remind me where everything belonged so that I could echo the same care at the end of the season. I un-pealed the Hudson blanket and pillows which had been wrapped in plastic and tied carefully to the cabin ceiling, and began to make myself at home for the summer. That summer I became delightfully practiced in hauling my own water from Swift Creek, about a half of a mile from the cabin, chopping my own wood, and commuting a minimum of eight-miles round-trip each day on my bike. Staying in the same location for over three months, also echoed the experience of many Park residents who leave their rural Alaska homes very rarely.

I participated in many social events in Park communities, including public lectures, story telling performances, potluck dinners, barbeques sponsored by the governor of Alaska, community softball, dances, and other windows into community social relations. This approach also expanded my perception of local values and how residents in the Park see themselves in relation to the rest of the

community and the United States on the whole. In addition to participating in daily activities, I attended several community meetings, including the monthly McCarthy Area Council meetings, a three-day interpretive planning workshop hosted by NPS, meetings surrounding the revisions of the Kennicott Operations Plan and other resource management meetings. By conference call I participated in two of the Park's Subsistence Resource Council Meetings, which occur bi-annually, and I also reviewed the minutes from the meetings that I was not able to attend. [1]

It was not unusual for public meetings in the Park to include members of the federal, state, and local government in a small setting of 20-30 people. I assisted in these meetings by taking minutes and often making my audio recordings publicly available. This gave me the opportunity to observe these negotiations, examine power relations and the bureaucratic process up close, as well as participate in the numerous informal conversations that surrounded these processes.

From an early stage of my research, I attempted to gain trust in Park communities. For example, through online communication and an in person presentation in March of 2011, at an early stage of the research, I informed the McCarthy community that I wanted to begin my project by having local residents help me identify the most vital research questions and issues related to NPS management in the area. This inquiry resulted in a great deal of feedback from the community and I continued this practice throughout my research in other Park communities. While Wrangell-St. Elias is a primary base for a significant portion of the ecological and geomorphologic research that takes place in Alaska, local residents complained that the vast majority of these researchers arrive in the summer, stay a short time, and often leave without sharing their results with the community. Even the executive director and others at the Wrangell Mountains Center, one of the area's central non-profit field education centers, which includes an extensive research library and hosts many academic researchers, shared that complaint with me.

Several community members told me that they appreciated the time I put into inquiring about people's stories, the improvisational open ended approach to my research, and my willingness to admit how much I did not already know. Often, I found myself wanting to share the knowledge I had gained through the university system, the ideas I had gleaned from a recent book, article, or the work of a particular scholar, with my interviewees. Rather than holding this information

[1] Title VIII of the ANILCA created the Regional Advisory Councils (Councils) and required them to provide recommendations and information to the Federal Subsistence Board, review policies and management plans, and to provide a public forum for subsistence issues. Under Section 805 of ANILCA, the Federal Subsistence Board is required to give deference to Council recommendations on fish and wildlife proposals except for under limited circumstances. For purposes of Federal Subsistence Management, Alaska is divided into 10 geographic regions. Each region has a Subsistence Regional Advisory Council consisting of local residents who are knowledgeable about subsistence and other uses of fish and wildlife in their area.

back for fear of influencing the content of the interview, I would usually offer it up, using my best judgment about the particular context of the interview.

Despite my efforts, I faced the challenge of responding to the stereotypes many local people in and around the park often associate with academic scholars. I had to consider the perceptions of government and bureaucracy with which I was often associated. Others linked me with my former leadership role at the Wrangell Mountains Center and labeled me an environmentalist. To address this bias I made a clear point of explaining that issue in my interviews and assert that in some cases I have come to be critical of environmentalists and the impacts they have had on people and landscapes.

I used a snowball sampling approach that entailed collecting data from a few members of the target population, and using the content of that interview to help identify additional people that might provide useful information. The idea behind this method is that data and knowledge grows from extended associations through previous acquaintances, thus, the sample group appears to grow like a rolling, accumulating, snowball. There were several occasions when one interview would raise questions that would prompt me to approach a particular individual. Sometimes these follow up interviews were also used to fact check a previous statement or explore a particular theme in greater depth. Due to the remote locations of Park residents, and the fact that many people are not listed in an official directory like a phone book, this technique was especially appropriate. Continual conversations over the years with many of these individuals also allowed me to add more depth to this approach. I also developed ongoing relationships with a few of the key informants that I interviewed and there are several people that I speak to on a regular basis over the phone.

Most of my contacts within the Alaska Native community were those within the Athabascan tribe, which is the central tribe in interior Alaska. Within this group, I made connections with individuals though NPS and public meetings, primarily with the Ahnta Athabasan community that I had the most access to. I also interviewed people in the Eyak community during my brief time on the Alaska Gulf Coast. I followed the guidelines of Human Subjects as well as those of the Alaska Federation of Natives (ANKN 2013) and adhered to informed consent, confidentiality of personal information and review. When requested I provided copies of the transcripts of my interviews. I also allowed many community members to read draft chapters of my dissertation though voluntary action and when they were requested.

Another central aspect of my methodological approach involved comparing archival narratives of the past with more current narratives of how people remember the past. These long-term, historical perspectives strongly conditioned responses to current management, even if their experiences with that management had changed. I conducted archival research through the Denver Public Library, the Bancroft Library, NPS offices in Anchorage and Copper Center, the Wrangell Mountains Center Library, Friends of Kennicott and the

McCarthy Area Council. This research also draws on reports written by governmental and non-governmental and conservation organizations as well as individuals in and around Park communities.

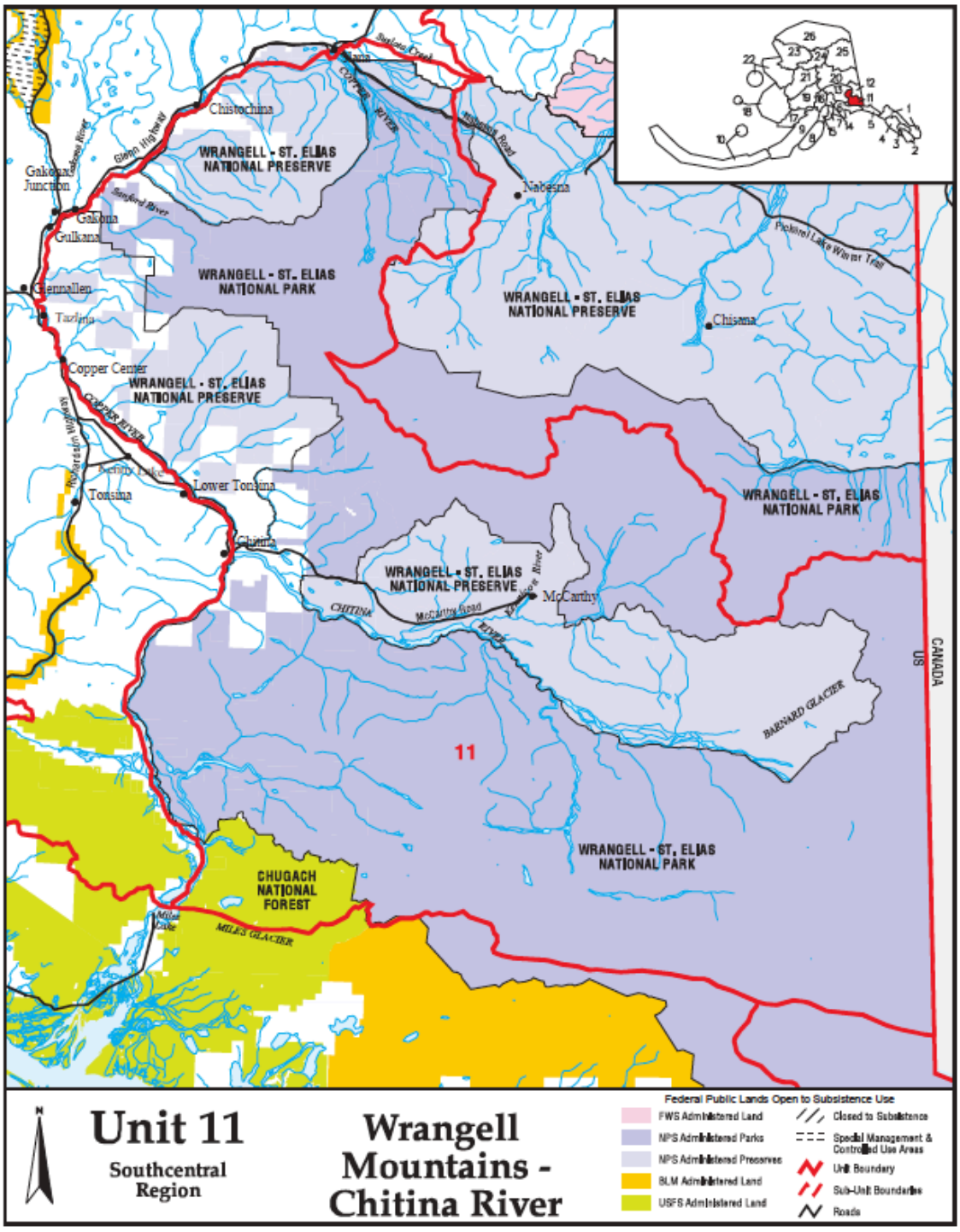

Figure 2 Map of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, courtesy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Figure 3. Setting up a solar system at the Beaver Creek cabin.

Introduction

Plans to protect air and water, wilderness and wildlife, are in fact plans to protect man.

– Stuart Udall, 1971

As one departs the paved Edgerton Highway that leads to a rough dusty 58-mile gravel coated road into the middle of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, you do not encounter a tollbooth, or pay an entry fee. There is no ranger to greet you, advise you on safe travel, or answer any questions about the human presence or biophysical processes in this landscape – even though there are visible triggers for such inquiry all along this journey. The McCarthy Road was built before the establishment of the national park over a former railway bed that was constructed hastily during the mining era. Once the "gateway to great fortune," its narrow ribbon winds over historic one-lane bridges and raging muddy rivers. Breathtaking sites along the corridor include massive peaks, ice, kettle ponds, meadows and wildlife – moose, trumpeter swan, snowshoe hair rabbits, lynx, and bald eagles are common sites, as well as the occasional spotting of a lynx or wolf. With lingering railroad spikes that are notorious for popping tires, washboards, potholes and sharp corners, the road is an institution that has prevented RVs, tourist buses and large crowds from entering the Park – until recently. Today it is increasingly easier to drive, sections of it have been paved, the number of culverts that curb flooding and ice build up have expanded. Thirty-six NPS signs, often punctured by bullet holes, now line this road, demarcating

the difference between national park and preserve lands, wilderness and non-wilderness, areas where sport hunting and subsistence use are permitted.

The McCarthy road is a vivid example that wilderness does not exist outside of human boundaries and histories, and it serves as a metaphor for the fact that these circumstances are continually reconstructed and reimagined.

Scholars and popular writers have addressed the ways that Americans have legally and culturally constructed wilderness, often evicting residents to inaccurately render landscapes uninhabited and "pristine." The consequences of imposing the U.S. model for wilderness has most often been examined in the context of under resourced countries or in the removal of Native inhabitants of that landscape (Spence 1991, Cronon 1996, Neumann 1998, Solnit, 2000). In contrast, the story of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve reveals the complex processes by which Native and non-Native Park residents and government authorities have combined to create an *inhabited wilderness*: an area renowned for its natural beauty and its lack of industrial development in which residents have played a role not only in preserving the landscape, but also their own privilege to live in it. This study considers the agency of local residents in shaping wilderness.

I pose the following central question in this dissertation: what happens when people are allowed to remain living within a national park in a "first world" setting? I address this inquiry by examining the history and politics of wilderness management, natural and cultural resource management, paying particular attention to whose voices have had the most influence in shaping these processes, and who has benefitted from *inhabited wilderness*. I examine these processes through archival research, participatory observation and informal interviews, paying particular attention to how narratives have changed over time and the interaction between local and national narratives surrounding park management.

In 1980, the National Park Service (NPS) began the trials of managing what historian Theodore Catton (1997, p.5) originally deemed this "inhabited wilderness." Containing the novel idea of co-existence between protected parks and human settlement in the 1970s, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) enabled the designation of ten national parks and 56 million acres of legislatively protected wilderness – tripling the amount of wilderness in the United States, and doubling the size of the national park system. Following years of contentious negotiation in Congress, the Act mandated the continuation of traditional lifestyles by both "Native and non-Native rural residents."[2] Title VIII of ANILCA contains the concept of permitting

[2] Referring to "first nations" or "indigenous" people is a controversial subject. I want to first acknowledge that indigenous peoples are members of "nations," as they determine them, however complex this term may be to define; second, I want to recognize indigenous peoples' shared and co-existing experience of colonization and resistance. For the purposes of this dissertation, when not referring to a specific tribe or group, I will use the legal term "Native Alaskan," which is recognized under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) and also the term that many indigenous Alaskans use to refer to themselves. I use more specific names when referring to a particular community. For example, I refer to the

subsistence activities within park boundaries. Stemming largely from urban areas in the lower 48, preservationists initially proposed this idea to attract the much-needed state support of Native Alaskans[3]. As the Act moved through Congress and invited sharp criticism from non-Native Alaskans, a brittle compromise was made to extend these rights to include all rural Alaskans that were living within and around the proposed national parks (Turner, 2012, pp. 141-181). ANILCA tasked NPS to preserve not only the ecological integrity of the parkland, but also the lives of the rural people living on that land.

Initiated by the single stroke of President Carter's pen under the Antiquities Act, the ANILCA legislation that was passed by Congress in a lame duck session before Carter left office, triggered immense protest from rural Alaskans who chafed about being under rule by Washington, D.C. From the time it was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1977 until it was enacted in 1980, ANILCA was considered in over a dozen versions. This contentious process generated thousands of pages of documentation that revealed a wide range of American attitudes toward wilderness and the role that humans play in ecological systems.

ANILCA launched an experiment in blending local, national, and international interests around wilderness (Catton, 1997). Over 100 specific provisions of the legislation require some form of federal agency consultation with the State of Alaska. In addition, numerous other federal laws, regulations and policies require state consultation.[4] Though many of these provisions are complex and ambiguous, ANILCA set the legislative framework to protect this area for its wilderness qualities and national historic sites, as well as living rural communities, legally recognizing the ongoing interaction between people and nature. And it has allowed local residents to play a significant role in that process.

"It was that tension between the rights of native peoples to be masters of their own cultural evolution on the one hand, and the desires of preservationists to retain the "primitive" feeling of Alaska's pristine wilderness on the other, which made the new parks so interesting and yet so fraught with difficulty," Catton wrote less than ten years after ANILCA was passed (1997, p.2).[5] Yet Catton did not look at Wrangell-St. Elias at all. He was not able to consider how ANILCA has played out 25 years later. His focus was primarily on the experience of Native Alaskans instead of "man the hunter" including those with European descent.

Native Alaskans in Chistochina, Alaska as Ahtna Athabascans. I also use the term "non-Native," with awareness that these definitions are essentialized by law and that there is a great deal of blurriness between them.

[4] Interview conducted by Margot Higgins on June 15, 2011 on a drive from Wrangell-St. Elias to Anchorage, Alaska.
[5] Title VIII of the ANILCA contains the concept of permitting subsistence activities within park boundaries: "The Congress finds and declares that . . . the continuation of the opportunity for subsistence uses by rural residents of Alaska, including both Natives and non-Natives, on the public lands . . . is essential to Native, physical, economic, traditional and cultural existence and to non-Native physical, economic, traditional and social existence." Nevertheless, this legislation only established an *objective* for subsistence, which has led to court battles and has complicated land management in Alaska national parks.

And he did not address recently revised NPS conception about what constitutes true "nature" or "wilderness."

Today, our biggest national park and designated wilderness area in Alaska occupies a space in-between settlement, labor, and wilderness as legislatively defined. Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve is home to one of the largest resident zone populations of any national park. Roughly 5,200 residents are eligible to claim subsistence, which includes hunting, fishing, wood gathering, small-scale mining and the operation of tourist businesses – outside of the more typical relationship between NPS and corporate concessionaires. Park residents also include local NPS employees, many of whom arrived soon after Park establishment. They have also embodied local experience and taken on a variety of local practices. Locals of Wrangell-St. Elias express many visions for this park that are entangled with one another. The meaning of preservation, historical significance, traditional rights, access to subsistence, native claims to territory and local governance, continue to play out.

Using Wrangell-St. Elias as a case, my dissertation examines the ways in which these converging and contradictory narratives at local and national scales have operated in the context of wilderness, natural resource, and cultural management and practices.[6] This study considers NPS, Native and non-Native rural Alaska perspectives and livelihoods prior to and after the establishment of Wrangell-St. Elias in 1978, and how the state and federal government, and local people have responded to the Park. I do not intend to associate any direct causality between the formation of Wrangell-St. Elias and the changes that have occurred. Nevertheless, I do claim that the establishment of the Park as a piece within a longer set of histories, has influenced the transformations that have taken place far beyond the influence of land preservation with local residents playing a role in that shaping.

Methodologically, I argue that a layered narrative approach is one way to better understand management conflicts between NPS, Native Alaskans and non-Native Alaskans. A large number of scientific studies have been conducted in Wrangell-St. Elias, in addition to several historical ethnographies on subsistence and Native Alaska populations (McKennan, 1959, Simeone, 1995, Simeone and Valentine, 2006, Haynes and Simeone, 2007, La Vine and McCall Valentine, 2014) but there has been very little critical social science research that looks at a range of Park residents, their relationships to one another, and the NPS. Wrangell Saint-Elias has a more extensive history of scientific research than most other protected areas in the Western Hemisphere (Wrangell Mountains Center Bibliography, 2012). Since the late 19th Century, science has played a substantial role throughout the region and has been the backdrop for numerous exploratory endeavors and large-scale research programs (Danby et al., 2003). Nevertheless, after reviewing NPS archives as well as the 42-page bibliography of journal articles, dissertations, master's theses, student projects, and grey literature in a

[6] I use "Wrangell-St. Elias" and Park with a capital "P," throughout my dissertation as an abbreviation to refer to Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

local library database, I found very few references to social science research that capture the level of complexity critical social science scholars have repeatedly called for (for example, West, Igoe at al., 2006).[7] Among the most prominent sources of qualitative ethnographic research in this database is a 1981 report conducted by students and faculty at UC Santa Cruz, entitled "One Long Summer Day," which compiled oral histories of mostly Non-Native local residents just after the establishment of the Park. There have been no comprehensive follow-up studies throughout the 23-resident zones of the Park. Critical conservation scholars Paige, West, Igoe and Brockington (2006) have called for more research that specifically focused on what "we see as a simplification process that takes place when biologists and other natural scientists write about, think about, and attempt to legislate the social relations between people and their surroundings." In this simplification process, the authors claimed that "rich and nuanced social interactions connected to what natural scientists see as the environment are condensed to a few easily conveyable and representable issues or topics."

In a traditional management model, narratives are often used to frame solutions, but they are rarely examined as one set of interacting variables at local and national scales in a complex system. The approach also ignores the story that the non-human environment tells. Wrangell-St. Elias is a good location to examine the constantly shifting dialectic between changes in society, changes in resources and changes in the land. As a man who has spent extended periods of time in the area since 1971 told me in one of my initial scoping interviews, it is "a place where the confluence between specific ecological realities and specific human adaptations are a part of the evolution of cultures in place."[8]

Nancy Langston (2003, p. 4) notes, "An ecosystem is a product of its history, and that history includes cultural as well as ecological forces." As she suggests, more complicated histories may offer insights into better land management. Not only is change perceived differently by the various individuals and communities in Wrangell-St. Elias, but change also relates to centuries of settlement geographies, government policies, changing cultural relations, shifting economies and power dynamics and the evolving relationships formed by interrelationships of people and the environment. I will focus on these dynamics in this dissertation.

I identify Wrangell-St. Elias as an arena where different social actors with asymmetrical political power are competing for access to and control of natural resources. Here, as in most national Parks, management models are often imposed from the outside – directly from the agency, the academy or indirectly through national policy makers. Nevertheless, in the case of this "inhabited wilderness," local residents have also been central players in reshaping these models to suit their needs. Sometimes, however, local approaches to management and leadership in Wrangell-St. Elias do not always get captured, despite the efforts of NPS to incorporate input from park residents. These

[7] This bibliography was prepared by students, board members and staff at the Wrangell Mountains Center in McCarthy, Alaska.
[8] Interview conducted by Margot Higgins on July 24, 2011 at the Wrangell Mountains Center in McCarthy, Alaska.

challenges are further complicated by changing demographics, a dwindling NPS budget, and the fact that higher ranked NPS employees in Wrangell-St. Elias sometimes have little local experience with, and limited comprehension of the area's history or social dynamics. When management models incorporate community input, the recommendations often reveal power relations and local residents have more influence in some areas than others. Within local narratives there are often conflicting views between Native and non-Native Alaskans, local and seasonal residents, wilderness advocates and those who oppose wilderness among other groups – though not always. These relationships are intertwined and shifting.

Conflict over national park establishment and wilderness protection is often told as a story pitting commodity development utilitarians, including corporations, local communities dependent on resource extraction, and federal agencies co-dependent and captured by them, against alliances of nationally-based, non-resource dependent, non-local primarily urban stakeholders who intentionally design federal agencies to be non-responsive to locals. Behaviors by NPS and other federal agencies, that otherwise might appear irrational, dysfunctional, or inexplicable are driven in part by this history and alliance with national stakeholders and narrative myths. Local people are often left out of the conversation, however, and the narratives they convey do not easily fit into national stories or management regimes. Given this absence, I revitalize the role of local narratives to understand the economic, cultural and natural resource changes that have occurred since Alaska national park establishment and how these narrative conflicts can contribute to and interfere with park management.

Combined with critical theory, a narrative analytic can help to formulate increasingly intractable environmental problems in ways that make them amenable to a more publicly engaged management practice (Rowe, 1995).

Physical Geography

Throughout this dissertation I will demonstrate that the non-human environment has powerfully shaped local and national narratives, functioning in this way as a narrative itself. As a biophysical landscape, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve epitomizes all that one might think of as nature in its most raw state: It is an atmosphere with gritty, silty air, grinding rocks and calving glaciers. It is a vast ice covered land that hosts iconic wildlife: grizzly bears, packs of wolves, lynx and some of the largest remaining flocks of Dahl sheep in the world. It is a land of glacially fed dam-less rivers with giant icebergs that host thick migration routes for five species of native salmon. It is an area where extremes meet, a region where one is often very conscious of the weather, of space, of deep frozen silence, the roar and tumble of ice break up, the arrival of spring song-birds.

The region is a place where one can witness physical and human evidence of what historians refer to as the *longue durée*, or history as it occurs in deep time (Flores

1996). One can imagine how the human and non-human world have interacted for a period that exceeds many generations of human life. Long a location of international confluence through trade, colonialism, industrial development and tourism, the Wrangells also exemplify that while the deep histories of this isolated landscape may appear to operate at a distance, they are globally intertwined and they bring historical trends into a greater perspective. The urgency of the contemporary situation in protected areas such as the Wrangells, particularly in relation to shifting economies, populations, and climate change, also exposes the inadequacy of the short-term view.

Over 200 glaciers in the ice-covered central plateau of the park combine to form some of the world's largest and longest glaciers, several of which stretch to the coast. Twenty-five percent of the land in Wrangell–St. Elias is covered by ice and the region is home to the greatest concentration of glaciers in North America. Six of the tallest peaks on the continent are located in this national park, including Mount Saint Elias at 18,008 feet. The Park and Preserve encompasses four mountain ranges and three climate zones (Drazkowski 2011). Coastal and marine environments, snow-capped mountains, calving glaciers, deep river canyons and fjord-like inlets all compose different areas of the park and preserve.

It is difficult to conceive of the 13.2 million acres that encompass the National Park and Preserve as a single unified non-human landscape because there is such an extensive diversity of microclimates. The influence of glaciation at a landscape level has led to a similarly broad range of stages in ecological succession related to the dynamic movements of glaciers. Subtly different glacial environments and landforms have been concentrated within the region by the sharp temperature and precipitation variation between the coast and interior basins. There is a rich variety of terrestrial and coastal marine environments with complex and intricate mosaics of life at various successional stages.

Reading Wrangell-St. Elias from a geomorphological perspective, one can experience a variety of natural processes in action, including volcanic activity, mountain formation and glacial retreat. The Wrangell Mountains have been deemed as the closest approximation of the features and processes which typified the Pleistocene era in North America with conditions that were prevalent throughout the continent before the most recent geologic era (Shaine et al, 1973). It is a collage of geologically distinctive crustal fragments separated by major fault systems. These fragments exist in all shapes and sizes, but each has a history that differs from that of neighboring fragments. All of these are foreign, that is, they were formed elsewhere and transported to their present position by the motions of crustal plates. Some have been rotated relative to their neighbors, and some have been displaced vast distances compared to less traveled nearby fragments. Thus, adjacent fragments generally differ in the characteristics of the rocks that make them up and they differ in the structural modifications that these rocks have experienced (USGS 2000).

Over several million years landforms in the park have been shaped by ice, frost, melt water, landslide, volcano and avalanche activity and wind. It was not so long ago that the mountains of this park rose from the sea. The land features continuous mountain building where one can observe a broad range of glacial processes, including examples of lateral and terminal moraines, hanging valleys, nunataks, ice dams, and other geomorphological features (Shaine et al., 1973). The area is also identified as the most active volcanic area in North America. The first Wrangell volcanoes formed about 26 million years ago. Mount Wrangell, one of 12 active volcanoes in the Park, is the largest and highest active volcano in Alaska (Richter et al., 1995). Massive amounts of water, ice, and sediment carve through this landscape on a yearly basis, far exceeding the amounts that travel through milder climates. Silty, grey, wide braided rivers carry icy water from hundreds of square miles of glaciers out of the region. Some have referred to the area as "a vignette of Pleistocene America," as the area retains many of the features and processes which typified the Pleistocene." (Shaine et al., 1973, p. 22.)

The area also contains a wide diversity of habitats, including interior and coastal spruce forest, recently de-glaciated primary successional ground, river bars, bogs, and alpine tundra. The highly varied climate and geography of the Wrangells influences the composition, distribution, and abundance of plant and animal life, which has evolved to make finely tuned adjustments to the wide range of climate, altitude and sunlight exposure in the area (Drazkowski 2011). In this place, one can watch the initial forms of plant life take root for the first time in thousands of years due to the visible patterns of ecological succession that follow glacier melt. According to the most recent NPS database, there are 44 mammals, 194 birds, 50 fish, 2 amphibians, and 1,315 vascular plants present in the Park and Preserve. These species include Dall's sheep and mountain goats that traverse high alpine ridge lines, caribou that migrate thousands of miles, moose that wade through bogs; sea lions, otter and harbor seals that occupy the coast. Wolves, lynx, grizzly and black bears roam remote highlands and human inhabited valleys. Trumpeter swans nest near glacial kettle ponds and hundreds of species of migratory birds use the Copper River drainage area as an annual flyway (NPS 2011).

The above description could support preservation values through a particular series of data that supports western scientific rationales for why this area might deserve designation as a national park in part of one of the world's largest wilderness protected areas. It is one that is quite compatible with an ecological vision for conservation – one that is shaped by a conservation ethic that envisions protected areas as the final sanctuaries for threatened wildlife and habitat (Newman, 1998) and as laboratories for scientific research and monitoring (McCloskey, 1998). This selection of data proving the area's rare array of intact habitat and wildlife species was the dominant theme that residents of the lower 48, emphasized in their national campaign to protect Alaska wilderness. As numerous critical scholars have noted, however, such a rationale has also deemed the human inhabitants of these landscape as part of the conservation problem (Neumann 1998, Sayre 2006, Ogden 2011).

From Copper to Conservation

Following the Russian Fur Trade of the 18th century until the present, Alaska has experienced a rapid expansion of natural resource exploitation and industrial activity. As one of the last relatively undeveloped environments when it became part of the United States in 1870, Alaska was explored, mapped and utilized for the market economy at an unprecedented rate. The main industries included mining, fisheries, hunting, and oil and gas development beginning in the 1960's, among other forms of extraction (Campbell 2007). Kennecott, located in the middle of Wrangell-St. Elias became one of the largest copper mining sites in the world.

The intensification of resource exploitation in Alaska caused significant changes to socio-cultural systems, particularly to Native-Alaskans. There has been significant disruption of local lifestyles through geographic and colonial displacements, park management decisions, cultural reduction and diffusion, among Native Alaskans, and a growing dependency on national and international economies. At the time of initial Russian contact with Alaska in 1741, Natives of the region had a long history of self-sufficient subsistence economies based upon the harvesting of abundant natural resources (Rogers 1962). Russian exploration and exploitation devastated these economies and the human beings functioning within them (Merchant 2012).

In the late 1800's, the Wrangell-St. Elias region experienced a frenzy of exploration and mapping. Spurred by an influx of prospectors during the Klondike gold rush in Canada, the U.S. Geological Survey and War Department increased efforts to create topographic and geologic maps of the area. In 1899 gold was discovered on Jacksina Creek near the headwaters of the Nabesna River in what is now the north part of the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. During the same year Oscar Rohn of the U.S. War Department found rich samples of copper ore in the moraine of the Kennicott[9] Glacier and over the next year two prospectors, Jack Smith and Clarence Warner, traced the chalcocite deposits to Bonanza Ridge and staked their claims on what would soon become the site of the incredibly rich Bonanza Mine, within the Kennecott mining operation. Stephen Birch, a mining engineer from New York, was sent to Alaska to look for investment opportunities. Confident that there was a fortune to be made, Birch set out to confirm title to the mining claims and obtained significant financial backing from industry giants Guggenheims and J.P. Morgan. "We want to go into the Territory [of Alaska]," said Daniel Guggenheim in a 1905 interview with the New York Times on behalf of the Guggenheim-Morgan Syndicate. "[We want to] build railroads and smelters and mining towns and bring men there and populate the country and do for it or what the earlier figures of American railroad building did for sections of the great West"(as quoted by Lone, J. 2002). The expansion of Manifest Destiny into Alaska unfolded and took root.

[9] The Kennecott Company name is spelled with an "e," while the name of the town, glacier, and river spells Kennecott with an "I". Kennicott is also the frequent spelling used among residents of that community.

With ore that included pure copper deposits of ten to fifty percent, "copper expert" Henry Bratnober with the Rothchild Exploration Company, declared the region to be "the world's greatest copper district." [10] In 1907 the construction of the 196-mile Copper River and Northwestern Railroad from Kennecott to Cordova was initiated. Crossing 46 powerful glacially fed rivers, rugged mountains, and active glaciers on its way to Kennecott from the coast, the railroad served as a key link in the development of the copper mines, bringing supplies from the lower-48 in and immensely valuable copper ore out.

Kennecott became a classic company town. Most of the miners from all over the globe that worked there lived in company housing and everyday activity revolved around the mining operations. Kennecott was managed as a dry town and miners were not allowed to bring their families –only the higher-level managers had such a right. Five miles south, the town of McCarthy was established as the site of a turnaround station for the railroad and it primarily became a miner, railroader, and prostitution center for the region. Restaurants, pool halls, hotels, saloons, a dress shop, shoe repair shop, dry cleaner, garage, hardware store, and a thriving red light district all popped up to provide services to more than 800 people in the area, including those from smaller mining operations outside of Kennecott including Chisana. The two towns coexisted for the 27 years that Kennecott was in operation.

Figure 4 Modern life at the hardware store built in 1911, McCarthy, AK

[10] "Cheap Copper in Alaska," *The New York Times,* April 5, 1909.

Following the decline of copper prices during the Depression, the mines closed and the last train pulled out in 1938. Local legend contends that newspapers and coffee cups and other signs of immediate departure remained in the homes of the operation managers and other non-miners.

Following the closure of most of the area's mines, small people lingered in the area and re-inhabited it, others discovered it for the first time, now appreciating this landscape for the lack of industrialization.

The Path to Inhabited Wilderness

In just over two decades, Alaska statehood(1959), native claims(1971) and park establishment(1980) were passed by Congress. These three federal acts were inextricably intertwined, politically, economically, and culturally. When Alaska became a state in 1959, virtually all of its landmass, or 95 percent of the state, was federally-owned. Some call the Alaska Enabling Act, the "most successful statehood bargain of all time." Under the Statehood Act, the state of Alaska was granted the right to select 104 million acres of land to be managed as a revenue base. During the first eight years, the state identified 26 million acres for selection. Among other concerns, the rapid pace of this selection prompted Native Alaskans to argue that the state should stop its selections until congress passed an act to settle native claims. In the 1960s, they began to visibly protest on a regional and national level that their aboriginal title had never been disrupted and that the state actions violated their property rights. Then, prompted by Native Alaska Concerns and the discovery of oil at Prudhoe Bay in 1968, Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall, declared a freeze on any additional state land selections (Bleakly 2002, Haycox, 2002).

Rapidly, the Nixon Administration, the State of Alaska, the oil industry, and the preservation community from the lower 48, were trying to win Native Alaska support. The 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) represented a possible turning point for Native American rights in Alaska that coincided with the civil rights and environmental movements. It was unprecedented in the United States for an indigenous population to potentially have so much control over the future of their land. The Act divided over 40 million acres of land into 12 geographic regions that would be governed by corporations, unlike the reservation system in the lower 48. Yet in section 4 of ANCSA, aboriginal title was dissolved and diverse tribal lineages were reduced and forced into federally recognized categories that did not acknowledge their connections to the land of their ancestors– or their experience of colonial history and cultural trauma[11]. Hundreds of individual clans were compressed into state defined categories. Identity became increasingly measured by blood and corporate accounting (Smith 2014).

[11] Phone interviews conducted by Margot Higgins on April 30, 2015 and May 6, 2015.

In the rushed process, Alaska Natives became large owners of land and capital assets. In Wrangell-St. Elias, the biggest asset that Native Alaskans received was the ownership of over 600,000 acres. The corporate nature of settlement initiated a tendency toward development of Native-Alaskan lands, yet the voices of individual Native Alaskans rarely made it to the negotiation table. Profit making became more reliant on the market based-economy approach to land use and a pro-development use of capital assets, primarily including minerals and timber.

Section 17 d-2 of ANCSA allowed Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall to withdraw 80 million acres of land in Alaska to be studied for possible inclusion in the national conservation system, including the withdrawal of the Wrangell Mountains. This gave Congress the opportunity until 1978 to decide which areas should be designated as national parks, wildlife refuges, national forests, wild and scenic rivers, and wilderness areas. The d-2 provision of Native Claims set a deadline for Congress to respond. If it did not act to designate these lands earmarked for special protections by 1978, the withdrawal would expire and the lands would be reopened to development. After ANCSA four powerful sets of landowners –the state, Alaska Native corporations, oil companies and the federal government– underwent overlapping and conflicting land selection processes that involved millions of acres. The d-2 provisions were especially frustrating to those Alaskans who wanted increased mineral development and the continuation of government-free rural lifestyles.

ANCSA also initiated the construction of the Trans Alaska Pipeline, which began in 1974, 20 percent of which cut across the Wrangell-St. Elias Region. Costing over $8 billion in construction, which lasted more than six years, the pipeline employed over 20,000 people. Of this number, the Wrangell St. Elias region housed the largest number of pipeline employees with close to 5,000 people. As workers settled in the area new communities formed, but employment opportunities significantly dropped off after the completion of the pipeline in 1977.

Congress failed to meet the 1978 deadline for conservation that would have permanently protected the d-2 land. Faced with the prospect of the 80 million acres of d-2 lands being opened again, President Carter and Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus executed massive withdrawals and Antiquities Act reservations that effectively extended these d-2 provisions and stopped the state and oil company selection of these federal lands. Given more freedom to make unpopular decisions, in a lame duck session, Congress finally finished the legislation after the 1980 elections and President Carter signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act into law just before leaving office. This Act allocated more than 103 million acres, most of which was former Bureau of Land Management land to the federal conservation system. The ANILCA legislation inserted 4.3 million acres to the National Park System, 53.7 million acres to the National Wildlife Refuge System, and 56.4 acres to the National Wilderness Preservation System, in addition to 13 rivers that were added to the National

Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Double classifications also added to the 103 million acres by combining national park and wilderness systems with wilderness designations.

Today, there are approximately 222 million acres of federal land in Alaska, which comprises about 60 percent of the state. Of that immense space, there are about 57.5 million acres of designated wilderness, making up approximately 54 percent of the entire nation's wilderness and 26 percent of Alaska's public lands (Turner 2012, p.170). Wrangell-Saint Elias is the largest national park in the United States with 13.2 million acres of protected land, eight million of which are designated wilderness. Overall, the Park contributes to 16 percent of the entire U.S. national park area. In addition to being part of the national park system, the United Nations recognized this national park as part of a 24 million acre UNESCO World Heritage Site which includes parts of nearby Glacier Bay National Park in Alaska, and Kluane National Park and Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Wilderness Park in Canada (Norris, 2002). Within Wrangell-St. Elias, about 13 percent is Native Alaskan land, or 600,00 acres. (Bleakley, 2002).

The "Emerging Rural Landscape."

When tourists think of Alaska national parks, they are more likely to consider Denali National Park, which receives the majority of Alaska's national park visitation at over 400,000 visitors per year. Many people from the lower-48 have never heard of Wrangell-St. Elias. The size of six Yellowstones and the entire area of Switzerland, the Park is one of the least populated regions in the world and it is one of the least visited national parks in the U.S. system. Fewer than 70,000 people on average travel there annually, according to the records compiled at the three Park visitor's centers.

Alaska's population has grown by more than 200,000 since ANILCA's passage. Economic transitions in rural areas have been among the most prominent changes that have taken place in Alaska and in the case of Wrangell St. Elias, this transition has occurred in the post mining, pre-park and post-park establishment eras. Like other political ecologists, I consider national park creation in Alaska as a form of economic redevelopment in remote rural areas (Neumann 1999, Kelley, 2012, Büscher 2013). Instead of counties, much of Alaska is organized by boroughs, which include the Wrangell-St. Elias region as an "unofficial borough." The joint jurisdiction of a multitude of federal, state and private owners govern the Park and its surroundings. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, in the upper Copper River Basin there are just three communities with populations over 350, (Glenallen, Copper Center, and Kenny Lake), with other Park communities ranging in size from 44 to 192 (U.S. Census Data 2010). With approximately 600 residents, Glennallen has the largest Park resident population and it is the business center of the region that primarily serves travelers along the Glenn Highway, selling gasoline, food, hardware, and other supplies and services. Offices for tribal government, schools and medical care provide most of the full-

time employment for local residents as well as the Bureau of Land Management, Alaska State Troopers, the Department of Fish and Game and state highway maintenance, National Park Service Head quarters are located in Copper Center 12 miles south on the Glenallen Highway.[12]

The Wrangell-St. Elias region, which includes the Copper River Watershed, is vast and sparsely populated with over five square miles for each of the approximately 5,200 residents that are eligible for subsistence. Most households of permanent residents in Wrangell St. Elias rely on a combination of wage labor, welfare, and subsistence practices to meet their daily needs. This diversified approach to making a living has been referred to as a "social economy" (Harder and Wenzel 2012). A social economy encompasses many institutions and includes both commercial and non-commercial activities and monetary and non-monetary transactions (Restakis 2006, Natcher 2009). For rural Alaskans subsistence food such as berries, duck eggs, salmon, moose, or caribou, represents a significant form of non-monetary resource exchange. Over the past thirty years, population growth, demographic shifts and better transportation access have resulted in increased harvests of traditional subsistence foods by growing urban populations in Alaska (Valentine, La Vine, and Kukkonan 2014).

Competition between commercial, personal use, and subsistence fishermen and hunters is increasing. Personal use and sport fishermen in the upper watershed share the annual salmon harvest on the Copper River. According to the Copper River Knowledge System, an open source data base, about 1.4 million salmon are harvested at the mouth of the River by the commercial fishing fleet contributing about $20 million on average each year to the regional economy. Upriver fishermen harvest an average of 200,000 salmon each year. Tourist outfitters and guiding companies that often provide services to customers who target fish and game resources have reached capacity. Reallocation of these resources is one of the most contentions management issues in the Park. The Alaska Board of Fish and Game was traditionally charged with making the allocation decisions that provide access and bag limits for fish and game. Because federal law provides for a rural priority for subsistence resources, and state law provides access regardless of residency, federal lands and state lands are now managed separately[13].

Since the early 1990s, there has been a substantial out-migration of the permanent population from this area. Poor fishing seasons, the rising cost of food and fuel, reduced state spending on schools, roads and other maintenance are among the reasons that were stated by the people I interviewed. Despite outmigration and a low population density, tourism has greatly increased in recent years, as have the numbers of seasonal homeowners and investors.

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[12] From "History and Physical Geography of the Copper River Valley, *Copper River Country Currents*, which can be accessed online at http://copperriverak.com/history-and-physical-geography-copper-river-valley

[13]This separation of federal and state management took place after Athabascan leader, Katie John sued the U.S. government in Federal Court in 1985. This was a response to the Alaska Board of Fisheries position to not allow Native Alaskans to fish at a traditional fish camp in the Batzulnetas area, at the junction of the Tanada and Copper River inside the Park.

Wrangell-St. Elias is increasingly an "emerging rural landscape" (Sayre 2011, p.437) where the goals of capital investment are no longer limited to the fur trade and mining natural resource commodities of the past. The area now attracts investments for tourism, housing development, and continued environmental conservation, as well as "speculation for all of these" (*ibid*). This pattern reinforces global patterns of uneven development, especially for previously marginalized populations, which are largely, but not entirely Native Alaskans. The processes surrounding the new rural economies may emerge simultaneously, or at permanent, monthly, yearly, and daily temporalities. "Value" may be attributed to the emerging rural amenities at local, national and international scales (*ibid* p.438). Through these economic transitions, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park is an example of conservation via accumulation (Brokington and Igoe, 2010, 470), through the transition from copper to conservation.

Most summer time residents in the more tourist driven economies of the Park are from urban areas, predominantly Anchorage and Fairbanks, but also New York City, Los Angeles, the Seattle area and the bay area, among other places. These part time residents travel back and forth to Anchorage or other urban areas far more frequently than they did in the past. And they want to hold on to the urban amenities they enjoy. In the more tourist driven communities in the park, the boundaries between rural and urban Alaska are increasingly fuzzy. Today you can purchase a cappuccino in downtown McCarthy, avocados and mangoes at the general store, craft beer, fine wine and a fancy multi-course dinner at the lodge. Many backcountry areas are now connected to the Internet, intentionally or unintentionally and there have been a few cases where this very recent connection has saved lives.

A decade after ANILCA, Catton (1990, p.3) characterized the 200-page legislation as "a mass of contradictions and compromises." In 2015, these inconsistent practices continue to be at play in Wrangell-St. Elias. Arguments from rural communities in Alaska for the continuation of "traditional livelihoods;" as promised by ANILCA have often been dismissed as it has been considered that they exaggerate these claims to secure continued subsidies from the state and federal government. Yet Alaskans express a parallel logic because they also rely on many subsidies from the federal government and capitalism at large. While many rural Alaskans identify as independent frontiersmen that make their living in a raw wilderness that residents of the Lower 48 cannot hope to understand, they do not want the federal government telling them what to do.

This fits within the larger national narrative of Alaska being overly subsidized by the federal government in rural communities. Nevertheless, such claims are based on limited research on the individuals and communities involved. According to the Tax Foundation[14] and the U.S. census of 2010, Alaska receives more federal taxpayer dollars per-capita than any state in the country with each person in the state receiving approximately $20,000 in federal funds per year. By

[14] Alaska Tax Foundation report retrieved on June 18, 2015 at http://taxfoundation.org/state-tax-climate/alaska

comparison residents of Nevada, the lowest federally funded state, receive about $7 per person per year. The disproportionate federal funds that go to Alaska allow them to function without a state income or sales tax. Alaska also receives a disproportionate amount of federal subsidies for military operations and oil and gas exploration.

Chapter Outline

Local and national narratives on Wrangell-St. Elias prior to and after the establishment of the Park in 1980, provide this dissertation's unifying structural approach. I will demonstrate that these narratives evolve in response to local and national politics, the imaginative force that the Park has exerted on local and national narratives, and conversely, that influence which extends from local communities into managing and visiting the Park. Rather than reinforce a declension narrative about park management my intention is for this work to provide a more hopeful and inclusive narrative, and to inspire a new set of perspectives and management plans. My theoretical outline provides a rational for integrating a layered narrative approach, my combined practice of political ecology and environmental history, and how I have set this research within the realm of first world political ecology. I will examine this narrative interaction in the following chapters:

Chapter One presents a contextual umbrella for the chapters that follow, each of which is related to how ANILCA is playing out. I analyze the interaction of local and national narratives over the concept of wilderness and how it applies to the management of the inhabited wilderness of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. In this chapter, I describe how certain residents who once opposed wilderness now use wilderness narratives to benefit their livelihoods, while Native Alaskan definitions of wilderness as the lived experience they have had for thousands of years are less recognized.

Chapter Two focuses on cultural resource management, with an example concerning the restoration of the Kennicott mining town where national narratives have had more traction in obscuring the living histories as expressed through local narratives in "inhabited wilderness."

Chapter Three examines the extent to which local residents have asserted power over NPS narratives in response to the narratives of non-human forces. I demonstrate how the narratives created by ice melt and flooding events have agency of their own, and also reveal power relations between the different communities in the Park.

Chapter Four also focuses on natural resource management and evaluates the opportunities within an "inhabited wilderness" for monitoring natural resources, examining local and national narratives about science and knowledge.

My conclusion looks at implications of my research for natural resource managers and questions for further study.

Contributions

I add to scholarship that analyzes the interaction of local and national narratives on the topics of wilderness, cultural, and natural resource management. This adds to a better understanding of the complexity of national park and wilderness management issues and how ongoing interpretations of ANILCA, and "inhabited wilderness" at large have played out and will continue to do so.

This dissertation contributes primarily to two bodies of research, environmental history and political ecology. First, it combines these disciplinary fields, a practice that is not often conducted, to investigate landscape and social change as a complex, ongoing process between a physical landscape, interacting cultures, individual perceptions and the state.

Second, I integrate a layered local and national narrative analysis along with an examination of historical and contemporary narratives to reveal the distinct livelihoods in rural Alaska and the intensely personal interpretations of change. Via this approach, this research seeks to better understand the entangled ecological, cultural, and psychological roots of how inhabited wilderness plays out. I show that cultural and historical complexity, in addition to the agency of non-human forces, are in fact an integral part of the creation and maintenance of this region of "distinctive ecological significance," that goes beyond NPS definitions.

Third, I expand scholarship that has focused primarily on the removal of Park residents in third world settings, by turning the lens to a first world context, where park residents actively shape park management strategies. This complicates understandings of the impacts of national park establishment by giving more agency to the unique livelihoods and influence of local people in shaping Park management. If it were not for the livelihoods that ANILCA has allowed to continue, Park residents would have less impact over Park management.

I examine the ways that intimate on the ground local views could be reconciled into NPS action and practice. This is especially relevant as NPS reaches its 100-year centennial in 2016. Increasingly, additions to the park system include existing human settlements as part of the protection of the landscape. Similar to the case in Alaska, many have experienced controversies over management policies. At the 2015 Summit " Science for Parks, Parks for Science," supporting local knowledge and cultural landscape within a wide range of people and settings were identified as central challenges for NPS in the next century. My focus on narratives concerning national park establishment and NPS management under the ANILCA legislation thus provides to how the overlapping

priorities of wilderness, ecological and cultural management policies are negotiated and enacted and experienced.

Theoretical Outline

This dissertation contributes primarily to two disciplinary bodies of research – political ecology and environmental history – to investigate social and landscape change in Wrangell–St. Elias National Park and Preserve as a complex continual process between changes in the physical landscape, the cultural landscape, and perceptions of these changes. I also incorporate additional approaches from human geography and anthropology. Focusing specifically on narratives about wilderness, natural and cultural resource management, I shed light on these processes at local and national scales. This dissertation focuses on how conflicting narratives at local and national scales influence and interfere with management strategies. I pay particular interest to how the benefits and burdens of the outcomes of these conflicts are spread across different sectors of people living within 19-resident zone communities of the park in relation to race and economic status and they ways in which people are resisting these outcomes.

Narrative Framing

Narratives make explicit the existence of multiple normative orders within the same social setting. Scholars have argued that in order to understand broad socio-ecological change we must also understand what is happening on the ground at the local level (Walker and Fortmann 2003, Cote and Nightingale 2012, Kosek 2006). Narratives can unravel how dualistic concepts, such as nature vs. non-nature, urban vs. rural, wilderness vs. non-wilderness, native vs. non-native are produced and transformed into seemingly objective patterns that construct individual and national conceptions of beliefs and practice. In this dissertation, looking at the interaction of local and national narratives helps disentangle such normative underpinnings for the meanings and management of people, wilderness and protected parks. Narratives can allow for the revelation of subtlety and nuance or they can vastly over simplify. Some narratives gain traction while others do not. This complicates common discourses of cultural and landscape change in our national park system, public, private and state interests. These discourses often reinforce binaries between various interest groups, without looking at how individual narratives interact with one another.

Behaviors by NPS and others, that otherwise might appear irrational, dysfunctional or inexplicable are often driven by an alliance with national discourses. Narratives can be a critical lens through which we examine the disconnect between what locals and the NPS think about these events and particular management responses to these events, expanding the existing analysis of these interactions. Within these narratives it becomes apparent that there are also many non-human agents at work in this landscape—mainly ice and water, but also earthquakes, landslides and volcanoes, among others. In Chapter Three for example, I treat glacier and flooding activity as focal points of environmental change that function as narratives themselves and around which human narratives converge and conflict in the Park and Preserve.

By analyzing narratives in conjunction with the diverse historical roots of park residents and NPS officials in a legislatively protected socio-cultural environment, I examine how different values and perceptions, settlement patterns, legislation, external and internal political influences and economic drivers have shaped and continue to shape a national park's past and its future. This is especially relevant as NPS reaches its 100-year centennial in 2016. In addition to reconsidering social injustices of the past and re-envisioning how to manage U.S parks, the agency must also address dwindling resources, a growing population and changing demographics that increasingly include urban as well as underrepresented populations. At the 2015 Summit, Science for Parks, Parks for Science, such factors were identified as the central challenges for NPS in the next century. My focus on narratives concerning national park establishment and NPS management under the ANILCA legislation thus provides a critique of how wilderness, ecological and cultural management policies are enacted and how they are experienced. I examine the ways that intimate on-the-ground local views could be reconciled with NPS action and practice.

Narratives are formed through social processes and human interaction with the non-human world. Narratives captured through qualitative research approaches are also an appropriate angle into better understanding the processes that generate "mental models," historical context and change over time (Sayre 2004, p. 668). These mental models are important in understanding how people might respond to recently protected areas and situations determined by non-human actors. Embedded within narratives surrounding "natural" events triggered by ice and water are entangled and often conflicting beliefs about our relationship to nature, science, technology, power and one another. How actors make sense of the social and ecological world informs how they act.

While NPS management decisions usually provide a cohesive narrative that fits with a national preservation priority, local stakeholders construct alternatives to explain their environment and they position these narratives within contested political and ecological contexts. NPS management decisions are not always self-evident or obvious to rural residents of the park. The power with which the national, regional and local NPS agencies enact or fail to enact management decisions from conservation science and cultural resource knowledge also lacks transparency. Yet some locals also maintain power during this process, while others are further marginalized. I will discuss the variety of ways that local stakeholders talk about wilderness, natural and cultural resource management, and link those narratives to national discourses about the role and power of the federal government. At the same time, particularly in the chapter on wilderness, I will use narratives to demonstrate that the experience of Park residents is sometimes shared by local NPS managers, particularly those who have spent long periods of time in the Park. An analysis of these narratives reveals the alternating perceptions around park management and also reveals similarities between different local interests.

Narratives combine to form common local discourses such as “The park service manages from afar,” or “the establishment of the park, has limited access to hunting or fishing, and other subsistence uses.” These critiques fit within larger critiques of NPS, such as those employed by the Wise Use Movement. Struggles over environmental policy and management, are inextricably intertwined with struggles over environmental discourse, which entails a constellation of individual narratives. In *The Politics of Environmental Discourse* (1995) Maarten Hajer argues that discourse is entangled with the social practices in which it is produced. He defines discourse as “a specific set of ideas, concepts and categorizations that are produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities” (p.44). According to Hajer, political transformation can take place through the emergence of new narratives that re-order previous discourses and understandings.

Drawing on Foucault, Hajer (p.43) argues that narratives, are not structured by the discourse of a single person, but rather they are shaped as by discourse as they are shared by people, groups, and the combinations of groups, which form discourse coalitions among actors that have different social and cognitive commitments. Rather than looking to expert science to solve management problems, he calls for a more comprehensive, interdisciplinary reflexive way of dealing with environmental issues, or in my case the response of NPS to management problems involving ecological and cultural issues. By this model NPS management would rely less on expert and national level discourse to determine appropriate management decisions. Instead the social realities and preferences of Park residents would shape what regulatory actions should be considered more seriously, and agency practices might be modified. This does not necessarily let locals off the hook, for practices that are deemed to be harmful, but it would improve the current process for management decisions and give greater consideration to the socio political and historical context through which these decisions are made. These decisions are relationships would be would be built on “trust, acceptability, and credibility.”

Integrating Political Ecology with Environmental History

I will combine and integrate approaches in political ecology and environmental history – two scholarly frameworks that are sometimes at odds with one another. There is some overlap between the disciplines, including a general pursuit of paradox and analysis of how what's supposed to work doesn't work, and how what's perceived as not working actually works. Nevertheless, though political ecology and environmental history are related thematically, they have very different origins, commitments, and expectations. While their evidence is usually very robust, environmental historians often suffer from a lack of transparency about their analytic method, theoretical commitments, and experiences. The challenge for political ecologists is to provide such robust historical evidence to justify their argument, whether or not their case fits the accepted theoretical frameworks, or to form new theory.

At the 2015 American Society for Environmental History (ASEH) conference, Nancy Langston explained that within the discipline of environmental history presentism and advocacy are considered "sins." By contrast, she argued that there is the need for clear history to shape environmental politics. We need to prevent industry from re-writing history. Current policy is often based on anecdotal versions of history. Similarly, Peter Alagona also claimed that his training as a graduate student included a historical analysis of presentism and warned against the dangers of historical analysis in which present-day ideas and perspectives are introduced into interpretations of the past. In order to engage in contemporary history, he noted that "[research] projects are always in motion." For example, he claims that his research on the Endangered Species Act has provided a proxy for larger social issues and relations. Moreover, he also asserted that there is little stability within disciplinary approaches, such as the field of conservation biology, which is critiqued by both political ecologists and environmental historians. Finally, Ellen Griffith Spears noted that environmental history is a field that traces different social movements that include community members, organizations, and the history of the tactics they have used, successfully and un-successfully. The incorporation of oral histories through the discipline of environmental histories is especially important for environmental assessment.

Political ecologists also argue for the inclusion of the increased role of present and historical narratives and archival work in their analysis, as well as more interdisciplinary approaches (Peluso 2012).[15] As a research approach with an emphasis on the effects of political, economic and social factors on environmental issues, political ecology sometimes entails a wider interdisciplinary framework for synthesizing the insights and methods of multiple traditions and integrating social, economic and political analyses around human-environment related issues. For political ecologists, the historical failure to intertwine the scholarly traditions of the physical and social sciences led to an inability among scholars to adequately understand and address issues of environmental protection and degradation in their larger geographical and historical contexts. As a result, a key aspect of political ecology is its engagement with both biophysical ecology and socio-political economic complexities, what Blaikie and Brookfield (1987) termed the "shifting dialectic between social groups and their physical environment." Nevertheless, history is often a subsequent priority despite the call from scholars within the discipline (Peluso 2012).

Theoretical contributions of political ecology emphasize this interdisciplinarity, seeing it as a "work of integration" between fields (Robbins 2002, p.1510). In addition, Robbins (2004) conceptualizes political ecology as an approach that aims to denaturalize dominant understandings and one that promotes better practices determined through historical and empirical analysis. For this dissertation, I will draw on the political ecology critique of the ahistorical, a-social and un-problematized "nature" or "wilderness" dominant within

[15] This was a central theme at the UC Berkeley Political Ecology Workshop on May 7, 2015.

conservation and anti-conservation, urban and rural discourses, seeking to complicate narratives that either ignore society and politics altogether or place them in binary opposition to nature.

Political Ecology And Environmental History Related to Narrative Analysis

My dissertation incorporates both political ecology and environmental history approaches to my investigation of local and national narratives in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

From the perspective of political ecology, narratives are embedded in particular economic, political, and ideological constructions and situated in local practices. Political ecologists question the separation of humans from nature and the ways that narratives, particularly through institutional state and scientific narratives, have reinforced those separations (Hecht and Cockburn 1989, Fairhead and Leach 1996). This has contributed to revised narratives of socio-ecological interactions that interrogate the assumptions that are embedded within certain analyses. They have also long called for analyses of the discursive productions of historical and contemporary events to understand how local, national or global processes interact over time (Bryant 1992, Peet and Watts 1993.) Nancy Peluso (2012, p.79) argued that "understanding how history is told or remains untold is an essential part of the politics of knowledge production," and should be a component of any political ecology analysis. Narratives change over time and political ecologists seek to understand why that is the case and how certain narratives inform policy decisions (Robbins 2004). I focus on how power and social relations are expressed through narratives. I examine these themes through a narrative analysis of local stakeholders and NPS officials revealing the alternating perceptions around park management and also to shed light on the similarities and discrepancies between various interests.

Incorporating approaches in environmental history to my narrative analysis, I trace local and national narratives, examining the changes park residents have perceived primarily between 1938 when the Kennecott copper mines shut down and 2015 – thirty five years after national park and preserve establishment. Given that landscape protection and responses to state management are both cultural and individual, I analyze the variety of different narrative histories created by people inhabiting the same landscape, as well as national NPS narratives, and to a lesser extent, tourist and non-human narratives over time. I examine the conflicts and compromises that emerged prior to and after park establishment and how people's attitudes toward each other and the non-human environment have shifted. I include perspectives of the Ahtna and Eyak peoples, Euro-American people, and NPS in this analysis.

Adding to First World Political Ecology

As Paul Robbins argued (2006), political ecologists do not always focus on issues that are close to home. One of the central challenges of political ecology has been to apply a discipline which has historically been focused on the "Third World" and apply it to "First World" market based economies (Robbins 2002, McCarthy 2005,). Robbins notes that there is nothing in the theory or method of political ecology that prevents the discipline from being applied to "First World" cases. By seriously engaging with the results of previous "Third World" political ecologies—"where many long-held orthodoxies about producers, state, and nature have been challenged and debated"—as well as the politics of natural resource management, scholars might view socio-environmental problems across contexts not as either strictly "First" or "Third World" dilemmas but rather "as similar and simultaneous" (Robbins 2002, pp.1509-1511).

McCarthy (2002, p. 1281) placed this direction within political ecology into a context that has direct applicability in Wrangell-St. Elias:

> *Imagine a movement composed of members of rural communities, whose livelihoods have long depended on a wide variety of uses of the lands and natural resources surrounding their homes. The movement's central complaint is that community members are losing access to and control over these lands and resources because of ever more vigorous pursuit of environmental goals by the resource conservation branches of the central government's trend spurred on largely by the interventions of distant, highly bureaucratic, and professionalized environmental groups, virtually none of whose staff or members has ever been to the particular lands in question. Attempting to defend their access to and control over these lands, members of the protest movement resist increasingly environmentally oriented management through a variety of tactics: they set forest fires, encroach on and take resources from protected lands, pressure government employees in the area to overlook violations, and support through silence community members who break conservation laws deemed unjust by local standards. To national and international audiences who will listen, they proclaim their superior knowledge and understanding of local environments, assert the historical precedence and legitimacy of their uses, and argue that local users should have greater rights than nonlocal claimants. Finally, they suggest that conservation is merely a cover for increased state control and the assertion of class privilege in the region.*

Such a description aptly and almost precisely describes the actions of rural Alaskans during and after the formation of native claims and Alaska national park establishment when anti-park protests swept across the region. Effigies of Carter were burned and early NPS employees were denied housing, gasoline, and a welcoming place for their children in local schools. Although it might be easiest to describe Wrangell-St. Elias as essentially a reiteration of the West's long tradition of utilitarian versus preservation commitments to the land, such a framework does not describe the debates in this park. The conflict in this park

has hinged as much on *who* should have authority over natural resource and cultural resource management and *whose* experience and knowledge counts.

Employing a first world political ecology approach one can look at these experiences more objectively, revising set definitions, reactions or understandings by instead looking to how these experiences are historical and institutionally applied, both materially and discursively, and always contested and unstable. Thus this approach does not adhere to clear divisions between the "First" and "Third Worlds," or between the "urban" and the "rural," both of which concepts have some presence in Wrangell-St. Elias and Alaska at large. This direction also looks to expand these to include non-human entities, such as ice, water and also objects such as cultural artifacts.

The contested issues in Wrangell-Saint Elias are "similar to those in third world political ecology studies: impacts of hunting limits, permitting systems, the closure of traditional commons, management of wildlife for recreational use such as sport hunting, and other issues." (McCarthy, 2005, p.1282)
Extending the questions posed by Robbins (2006), my dissertation asks how the local knowledge and experience of park residents diverges or converges with that of state, federal officials and preservationists and the extent to which this affects park management policy.

Figure 5. Looking out at the Chugach Mountains, courtesy of Andrew Mackie

Chapter One Relative Wilds: Negotiating "Wilderness"

To a lover of real wilderness, Alaska is one of the most wonderful countries in the world

–John Muir 1879[16]

When the epidemics came, it became quiet and ghostly, but it was never wild! When our Chiefs and Medicine Men sang to the wind in the great loneliness, it wasn't wild! Then came strangers, and laws, and decades of exploitation and great acts of Congress, soon after it became wild. . .

– Ahtna Resident of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve 2015

Introduction

Ask ten different people in Alaska what wilderness means to them and you might receive a hundred different answers. These definitions fluctuate over time. Dubbed by environmentalists and others as a "crown jewel" in the 1970s, Alaska has long been sealed in the mainstream American imagination as "the last

[16] John Muir. 1915. *Travels in Alaska*, Chapter Two, Houghton Mifflin Company
Alexander Archipelago and the Home I found in Alaska

frontier," "the last wilderness" and a place that is largely "untrammeled" in the United States (Nash 2001). Among the people living in and around Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, however, constructions of wilderness are exceptionally varied and shifting, due to the fact that Park residents are also taking an active role in shaping this "inhabited wilderness." This process has involved distinct and overlapping narratives from diverse actors –Native Alaskans, subsistence users, non–Native outfitters, wilderness advocates, the National Park Service and local Park officials–in shaping this meaning.

In this chapter, I pose the following questions about the "inhabited wilderness" experience of this national park: Why have resident and NPS views about "wilderness" shifted or remained static prior to and after ANILCA? Who benefits from wilderness legislation in Wrangell-St. Elias? Who does it include or exclude? To address these questions, I will incorporate an analysis of the historic imaginings of Alaska wilderness, the context of the large body of existing wilderness scholarship and the interaction of local and national narratives on wilderness, historically and in the present. I look at how claims to place, individual self-sufficiency, and belonging, influence changing perceptions of wilderness.

This chapter provides a contextual umbrella for the chapters that follow, each of which is related to how ANILCA is being defined and experienced between park residents and governing agencies. In subsequent chapters, I will examine the interaction of local and national narratives – including narratives from non-human agents – around cultural landscapes and natural resource management in this Park. Answering these questions about wilderness sets the stage for the understanding the positioning of local and national narrative around natural resource and cultural resource management.

Political ecologists have have called on scholars to examine how people have used definitions such as wilderness. Narratives can offer another way to understand why people have come up with certain definitions of nature and correspondingly how these definitions of wilderness, have enabled people to do certain things. Popular assessments about the success or failure of legislated wilderness preservation overlook how wilderness has been defined and redefined, and how human-nature connections have been experienced by various cultures over time. These evaluations also miss how contributions from indigenous people, wilderness managers, science, shifting cultural priorities and government funding expand and contract the space to influence various wilderness areas. This approach asks who certain conceptions of wilderness have served.

Narratives about wilderness in Wrangell St. Elias demonstrate how residents and NPS managers bring about different modes of meaning, claims to property, practices, and identity. They reveal how people speak about who deserves what. Changing sociological and historical conditions about wilderness influence politics and social relations through the divergent meanings attached to such changes by individuals and interest groups with different levels of power.

Historically, there has been little academic research beyond Theodore Catton's work ten years after ANILCA which focused primarily on the experience on Native Alaskans. Research has not yet examined how the interaction between Alaska Statehood, Native claims (ANCSA), and park and wilderness establishment (ANILCA) has played out several decades later with regard to wilderness narratives and management. In conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act in 2014, scholars expressed the need for more historical studies that examine how different groups of people, including local residents, Native and Non-Native Alaskans, government land managers, scientists and tourists, have been experiencing wilderness. This calls for more research not just of how protected areas came to be in the U.S., but also of how they have been managed, the impact of wilderness designation on local communities, their interaction with federal land managers and ecological effects (Turner, 2012). Incorporating historical analysis, I examine conflicting and coherent narratives over time to make more visible why certain definitions of wilderness have shifted in Wrangell-St. Elias.

Alaska wilderness imaginings

Legends of Alaska wilderness have long occupied the American imagination, well ingrained by the adventurous and majestic accounts of wilderness advocates including John Muir, Robert Marshall, and Mardy and Olaus Murie. Beginning in the late 1930s, with a visit to Wrangell-St. Elias by Ernest Gruening[17], then the director of the Interior Department's Division of Territories and Island Possessions for the territory of Alaska, requested that NPS create a new unit in Wrangell-St. Elias, which he suggested calling "Panoramic National Park." He wrote,

> *I have traveled through Switzerland extensively, have flown over the Andes and am familiar with the Valley of Mexico and with other parts of Alaska. It is my unqualified view that this is the finest scenery I have ever been privileged to see.*

Interior Secretary Harold Ickes supported Gruening and asked President Roosevelt to proclaim the area as a national park. The request was rejected, however, due to what Roosevelt saw as the need to prioritize strengthening our national defense at the onset of World War II[18]. In the 1960's, one of Alaska's first U.S Senators, Gruening revived the idea, suggesting that NPS create a "National Park Highway," and although the idea was shelved, a growing number of people, including agency officials, began to take a new look at the Wrangells as worthy of federal protection[19].

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[17] Ernest Gruening, " Memorandum to the Secretary of the Interior," Washington, D.C, November 7, 1938, 2, History Files, WRST

[18] President Roosevelt to Harold Ickes, January 21, 1941, Administrative History Folder, WRST

[19] Senator Ernest Gruening to Stewart Udall, November 17, 1966, History Files, WRST and Don Derenderfer and Robert Walkinshaw, One Long Summer Day in Alaska (Santa Cruz, CA: Environmental Field Program, 1981, p. 91)

Following the discovery of vast oil deposits in Alaska in 1968, environmentalists, particularly those who lived in the lower 48, increasingly expressed the need to protect Alaska wilderness in perpetuity. "Nature," as a social value rather than mining, oil or timber, could now trump the Alaska landscape. The campaign for protecting wilderness areas in Alaska became a focal point of environmental politics in the 1970s. Wilderness advocates also made scientific claims for the protection of Alaska's public lands with the idea that they could protect entire ecosystems intact, labeling the area a "blank slate."

To accompany the 1970s inventory by the Department of the Interior following ANCSA in Wrangell St. Elias, a group of professors and college students from UC Santa Cruz began assessing the proposed park area for its scenic, geological and natural resources. Funded primarily by the Sierra Club and the John Muir Institute for Environmental Studies, this student research group was flown into the park on a leer jet and funded for extensive fieldwork. Their research included 450 man-days in just one valley of the park, interviews with local state and federal officials and 120 hours of aerial reconnaissance in 1972 (Colley, Widden et. Al., 1973). The resulting conspicuous 17 X11 inch report, compiled by 21 predominantly white males (with the exception of three contributing females) was eventually placed on the desks or coffee tables of every U.S Senator.

Comprising 17 environmental groups in 1977-1978, the Alaska Coalition argued that "Alaska was the last best place to do it right the first time." The first slogan of the campaign was that Alaska was "the Last Frontier" or "Lasting Frontier," placing this protection within a fabled frontier narrative (Turner 2013, Haycox 2002). In 1978, the Coalition launched a lobbying effort that was larger than any previous wilderness protection campaign, including the Wilderness Act itself. Increasingly the campaign relied on iconic images of Alaska in the American imagination, while also emphasizing the threat of development, protecting intact ecosystems that were unrivaled in the lower 48 (Turner, 159). The protection of Alaska lands also marked a new direction and strategy for national wilderness protection campaigns. Beginning with its participation in ANCSA, in the 1970s this movement became increasingly consolidated in DC, as environmental organizations became more professionalized and engaged in direct campaigns to the national legislature. While still supporting local grassroots activity, the Alaska Coalition viewed these efforts as less impactful than directly lobbying Congress. (*ibid,* 161).

This approach also sparked deep political divisions over the appropriate incorporation of national, state and local interests in the protection of public land. While the Alaska Coalition made wilderness establishment a national issue in the lower 48, as their campaign unfolded, they faced increasing opposition not only from hunters and resource extraction industries, but also from grass roots preservation advocates and back-to-the-landers, who protested the expanding role of the federal government and the anticipated changes to their livelihoods and lifestyles (*ibid*, 147). Many Alaskans criticized elite environmentalists for

promoting a "lock-it-up and keep-them-out" philosophy (Hummel 1987), preventing them from their previous activities and access to the "commons" that they relied on in the proposed wilderness area. These rural Alaskans feared that the increased presence of the federal government through park and wilderness designation would create an "enclosure" around their particular uses of Park resources via hunting, fishing, gathering, mining and timber use, among other natural resource based activities.

Native Alaskans who were mixed in their support of wilderness preservation influenced both the protection and the development of Alaska's public land. Faced with fierce opposition from the majority of those living in rural Alaska, wilderness advocates latched on to Native Alaskans not only as a social justice civil rights cause, but also as a strategy to gain traction among Alaskans and the Alaska state government. At first, often through static essentialized views that constructed Alaska Natives as natural and maintained their existence as frozen in time (Catton, 1997), the Alaska Coalition supported Native Alaska claims. Nevertheless, many Native Alaskans did not entirely buy in to this claim. With some Native Alaskan support, a number of the areas that preservationists wanted to protect became classified as "preserves" that both Native and Non-Native Alaskans could use. These mixed-use wilderness areas also tolerated snow machines, motor boats and airplanes, as well as guns, chainsaws and cabins, among other human activities. In addition, the preservation areas for Native Alaskans allowed for some prospecting of oil and minerals.

Throughout the ANCSA and ANILCA processes, the Native Alaska corporations and other large tribal groups with an economic interest were largely the only Native Alaskans that were able to express and insert their interests at the negotiation table. Individual Alaska Natives or small groups were left out of these meetings. Of primary interest to the Ahtna in and around Wrangell St. Elias, was the removal of the section 4 from ANCSA when the provisions of ANILCA, which would have re-established many aspects of the traditional lifestyle they had lived for thousands of years instead of that which was defined by large Native and Non Native Alaskan interest groups, preservationists who were mostly from the lower-48, government, and the resulting legislation. Some Ahtnas particularly fault the preservationists involved in park and wilderness establishment who talked to corporations and the Alaska Federation of Natives,[20] but did not speak to tribal groups. They also accuse Senator Ted Stevens for the removal of all Native Alaska language from ANILCA. "We had no books to wave in the air," an Ahtna man told me. "What we do have are personal narratives trying to justify [our concerns]." [21]

The establishment of this national park presented unusual opportunities for alliances between Native corporations, some local people, the environmental community, the state and NPS. Nevertheless, many Native Alaskans had been reliant on Park resources for thousands of years. For example, one Ahtna man noted that water rights, which were significant to tribal groups in and around

[20] The Alaska Federation of Natives is the largest statewide Native association in Alaska.
[21] Phone interview conducted by Margot Higgins on 5.4.2015.

Wrangell St. Elias, should have been an inherent part of the ANCSA and ANILCA establishment processes and they were not.

Prior to park and wilderness establishment, the area was largely an undeveloped, unregulated area where Native Alaskans and non-Native Alaskans were able to glean subsistence, mining, timber, airstrip and road construction opportunities, without government intervention. This process of land and livelihood acquisition, which largely began in the post-mining era of Wrangell-St. Elias, was also shaped by the influences of colonization, displacement, class, and a simplification of the values of Native and non-Native Alaskans. With the unusual provisions in ANILCA, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve provides a good case study to analyze how these dynamics around federally designated wilderness have played out and fluctuated, often to the benefit of some full and seasonal land owners in the park and not others.

Scholarship on Wilderness

Scholars have examined the various ways that Americans have legally and culturally constructed wilderness and the many ways in which they have exported and imposed their preservation model across the globe and within the United States (Neuman 1999 Brockington, Duffy, and Igoe, 2008, Kelley 2012). This process has often involved evicting existing residents, especially those from marginalized populations, to superficially render landscapes uninhabited and pristine.

There has been much critical discussion of wilderness and its social and ecological impacts in the academic literature. As scholars have long noted, the history and popular conceptions of wilderness are also inherently raced and classed. Debates around wilderness have extended far beyond those around preserving the scenic landscape, ecological, cultural and environmental protection to include questions about the role of science, the power of the federal government, race, who represents the public interest, and individual rights. At the core of this is coming to terms with clear binaries and the lack thereof in particular constructions of nature and society and urban-rural. In his essay "Ideas of Nature" Raymond Williams (1980) notably asserted that the dismissal of human agency and labor in popular representations of nature, obscures people from a more realistic and complicated understanding of the complex relationship between the two.

Environmental historians, political ecologists, geographers, anthropologists, feminist, post colonial and indigenous scholars have debated similar questions about nature-society relations. As a well-known example of addressing the nature-culture split, in his essay, "The Trouble With Wilderness," William Cronon (1996) traced the roots of the American conceptualization of wilderness. The central trouble(s) with wilderness, Cronon argued, was that the concept overlooked the long historical role of Native Americans on public land, placed the priority of wilderness designation over the interests of rural communities, and

conveyed limits on the ways society as a whole recognized the complicated relationship of nature and culture. Many national parks and designated wilderness areas led to the brutal removal of those who already inhabited the land, particularly Native American populations. He claims that this pattern of wilderness designation, which reinforced the human-nature binary, did not recognize that people had been living in these areas for thousands of years, and ecologically altering the landscape around them. Pristine wilderness was a myth.

Feminist studies, indigenous studies, and post colonial scholars have also challenged this binary and demonstrated that conceptions of wilderness have existed long before the popular wilderness movement in the United States – a movement that was primarily led by white-upper-class male advocates and scientists (and that has also been critiqued by largely the same demographic.) Many cultures may not have used a precise word for wilderness, yet they incorporated many interpretations of wilderness in their lives and belief systems. These critics and scholars dig further back into cultural constructions of how wilderness has been conceived before "wilderness" became a popular or legal term, referring especially to the experiences of women, African and Hispanic Americans, and indigenous peoples. Such traditions have different meanings from European conceptions of wilderness, often referencing historical circumstance, power relations and engendering a mutual interlaced respect for non-human life and ecological processes. There is a reverence too for interactions or phenomena that were often beyond human understanding or comprehension.

For African Americans "wilderness" often served as a place of refuge for enslaved Africans where they could escape from white "surveillance." For enslaved Africans wilderness sometimes functioned as a source of power as well as a source of fear. Female views of nature often stemmed from African roots. For example in African spirituality wilderness was often viewed as a place of refuge and transformation (Neilson, 2011). African Americans were resilient and resistant to slavery by escaping into the wilderness when food ran out or to seek medicinal remedies when they or their owners were sick. Some women possessed very detailed medicinal knowledge, about various plants, including how to identify them, when to harvest them and how to prepare them. This knowledge often led to increased power not only within the slave community, but also among the slave owning community in the rural south.

Jake Kosek (2006) argues that for many Hispanics in northern New Mexico, "wilderness" is an abstraction that is far removed from the day-to-day working lives and history of the people that live there. The creation of these federally protected wilderness lands, especially the national forests amounted to an effective closure of the defacto commons of forest and pasture and the conversion of locally controlled and defined places into "nationally productive spaces." This closure not only affected access to resources but also identity. According to Kosek, the relationships of Hispanics to the land in New Mexico were formed by virtue of what Karl Marx called an "intricate metabolism" that mixes labor and landscape, remaking both in the process (p.18). He notes that the Forest

Guardians and other wilderness advocates promote the concept of an "open, unoccupied, "wild" frontier – a myth that has fueled dispossession of lands in America for a long time (p.178). Yet Kosek also argues that this narrative is not necessarily that simple and brings up the problematic aspect of viewing culture as fixed. He claims that it is just as important to examine the diverse ideas surrounding bloodlines, nature and wilderness within the Hispanic community as it is in the environmental community. There is no monolithic state for wilderness advocates, Hispanics, or federal managers such as NPS.

Scholars also challenge how western language has imposed placed meanings on other cultures. Language, they claim shapes world different views. (Boroditsky and Gaby 2010). When Boroditsky asked a group of distinguished U.S. professors to point southeast, they fumbled, pointing in several different directions, whereas five-year-old Australian aboriginal girls always got it right. There is a similar disconnect around the word "wilderness" among different language groups.

In a *New York Times* article, "What is the name for Indian Cultural Survival," anthropologist Keith Basso acknowledged the imposition of western values on the Western Apache people. "I began to see how superimposing an Anglo language on an Apache landscape was a subtle form of oppression and domination," he wrote. Elevating the non-western world views of the Western Apache, primarily through language, he claimed, "wisdom sits in places" (1996, p.2) and may not be smoothly transmitted into management plans. Because cultural and ecological landscapes are in continual flux, acknowledging these knowledge claims may only have applicability to particular places, in particular contexts at particular times.

Finally, Alaska scholars have also studied the contradictions raised by Alaska Wilderness conceptions. Among them, Robert Campbell asserts that John Muir's "ecstatic" portrayed Alaska in popular publications promised tourists that wilderness is served as a medicine for the ills of industrial civilization. The irony, however, is that this need to escape could only be achieved through the "cultural conventions" of technology, industry and urban life (Campbell 2003, p.58). Susan Kollin (2001) argues that ideas of nature–which include the transformation of a place that was once considered "a frozen wasteland," to a vast wilderness with national significance–demonstrates the way that these ideas shift and change throughout history.

Wilderness Narratives

Through the following narratives, I will demonstrate that views about wilderness are not fixed, rather they transform with experience in a place over time and that they have an impact on wilderness management. I will also examine the extent to which Native Alaska narratives have been increasingly marginalized by both non-Native Alaskans and NPS through Park preservation, and the extent to which they have surpassed such relegation.

To examine shifting local and national narratives around wilderness and the greater influence of these narratives, I incorporate an analysis of the interaction of narratives by Native Alaska residents and those of non-Native Alaskans, including subsistence users, outfitters, wilderness advocates, and local and national park service narratives.

Native Alaska Residents

There is no word for wilderness in any Native Alaskan language. This term had little counterpart in the language or practice of Native Alaskans, until it became a popular movement that was then legislated. Native Alaskan articulations of the wilderness project must grapple with the patent absurdity of placing a geographical boundary around Nature. "It is a basic human right to live off the land and depend on its resources," explained Sarah James, in her keynote speech for the Wilderness Act's 50th Anniversary. "Nature is our life. Only then can peace come to heart and mind – that is wilderness." One could indeed study the vast number of other ways that Alaska Natives express wild values.

In the decade prior to ANILCA wilderness advocates in the lower 48 courted the Native Alaska community for federal land preservation during the two-year push for the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), which was passed in 1971. To many Native Alaskans in Wrangell St. Elias, the establishment of a national park, the highest level of federal protection, meant the possibility of new jobs, a resurgence of indigenous cultural practices, and a launching point for resilience after decades of displacement and colonization. Nevertheless, many of the promises that were made to Native Alaskans by the environmental community and agency officials prior to Park establishment have not been met. Today, access to the cash or market based economy is severely limited in the traditional Native Alaskan communities and within the more isolated settlements.

Some of the 23 resident communities in the Park, especially those composed primarily of Native-Alaskans, have some of the highest unemployment rates in the United States. For example, according to the 2010 census, in Chistochina, 53.7% of the population is Native Alaskan. There, the median income for a household was $24,107, and the median income for a family was $41,250. Males had a median income of $41,250 versus $0 for females. The per capita income, used to measure standard of living, was $12,362. There were 29.6% of families and 28.6% of the population living below the poverty line, including 18.2% of those under eighteen years old and 27.3% of those over 64.

A male Ahtna Athabascan[22] resident of Chistochina[23] explained that he first heard advocates of the Wilderness League speak a year before ANCSA. "These preservationists wanted ANCSA because it would be a lock up land from development," he said. Concerns about oil development substantially crunched a

[22] Ahtna is a distinct language and ethnic affiliation of the Athabascan Native Alaskans. Within the Ahtna there are four different dialects (lower, upper, central, and western Ahtna) and eight tribal affiliations.
[23] Telephone interview conducted by Margot Higgins from Berkeley on May 8, 2013.

Native claims process that had required over a century in the lower 48, into less than a decade in Alaska, with less than two years to formulate the provisions of the ANCSA. The final law gave Native Alaskans a legal right to the lands they had traditionally used to allow for subsistence activities to continue.

He recalls being largely left out of the ANCSA negotiations, having first learned of ANILCA in the mid-1970s. In 1979 many of the priority land acquisitions of ANCSA remained, but they had yet to be transferred. Many individual Ahtnas and small Ahtna tribal groups wanted to eliminate the Section 4 provision of ANCSA which stated that Alaska Natives' claims to any traditional land rights beyond the settlement made by the Act would be extinguished. Section 4b reads "All aboriginal titles, if any, and claims of aboriginal title in Alaska based on use and occupancy, including submerged land underneath all water areas, both inland and offshore, and including any aboriginal hunting and fishing rights that may exist, are hereby extinguished." This was interpreted as the end of aboriginal hunting and fishing rights when the ANCSA legislation passed. The central question it raised had to do with which Alaska Native rights were extinguished: hunting, fishing, and land rights or only land rights? ANILCA offered the possibility of settling that question.

Nevertheless, while they believed that access to hunting and fishing should continue, many local Native Alaskans in and around the proposed Park claim they have had less say in the process.

> *There were a number of articles and editorials [in national and local newspapers] that said it was okay to think of places as wilderness. But let's not forget to [Alaska] Natives it was never wilderness. The playing field tilted to DC because that was where the money was. I thought it was my back yard because that was where benefits and damages would occur. . .*

After trying to be involved in the ANCSA without success, this man began to understand that the failure of the Alaska Coalition "was to not reach out to people like me." "People like myself were embedded in the system, but you could not buy people like myself out. A whole group of us were dumped out of the ANCSA process." He had memories of the meetings that surrounded park establishment, which involved the BLM, U.S. Forest Service, Conservation groups, Non-Native and large Native-Alaskan interest groups. But he also noted that many of these meetings took place far from his home, costing up to $1000 in travel expenses – a third of his annual income. He described a structural process that did not account for the experience or input of many Native Alaskans that would be the most impacted by the regulations.

> *I recall one meeting when the federal agencies called together 'user groups.' We were the smallest number of people at these gatherings. The largest were conservation groups and the meetings were never properly called. One was in during berry and fishing season. The other*

was in January. I would go to meetings and hear about protecting natives and there were two of us out of 85. . .

Despite the promises of ANILCA, non-Native Alaskans and the State have slipped into the behavior and discourse that maintains a tilted balance of power. While the protests articulated by non-Native Alaskans generally opposed the presence of the federal government in the form of NPS, this man contests the uneven results stemming from the structure of the process, and to a larger extent, the inherent behavior of the State. Specifically of past and present NPS community meetings he said,

After years and years now I am more inclined to think meetings occur to try to get the most turn out. So they can report big numbers. There is a giant statistics wheel in every agency director. I don't think there are evil intentions or a disingenuous plot to keep people like me out. They want a head count. America is very hung up on that right now. All they want is numbers they really don't want to hear anything. They are not listening to contributions of value. This absolves them of a potential negative outcome of decision. To a certain degree it makes sense. It is more difficult to analyze than provide numbers.

The idea of including various "stakeholders" or a particular head count in the negotiation process around wilderness is a western concept that perpetuates uneven and "dependent" relationships between Native and non-Native Alaskans and the state[24]. This individual recognizes that this pattern extends beyond the exclusion of the Native Alaska community in the wilderness planning process into a structural problem within the federal government. Yet in spite of this ongoing pattern he placed the experience within a long-term view of Ahtna knowledge and wisdom that also expresses cultural resistance. "We have a much longer experience and heritage in this state than the newcomers and the government," he said. The experience with park establishment, recent residents and "outlaws," is just a brief moment amidst thousands of years of living in the same area. Adaptations continue to take place in a variety of economic and social ways. While Native Alaskans have adopted many modern world habits, many of them continue to weave in community traditions, by relearning Ahtna language, reinstituting cultural camps and family subsistence activities. "No one considered the indigenous thought process so we work on personal narratives hooked in to tribal memory."

Though Chistochina has a high unemployment rate, he maintains that there is a distinction between people in poverty and people who are poor.

Most places in world don't make a distinction. People in poverty have no choice. Poor people are in a financial bind because of choices they made. Poor people like those unemployed look at adaptability in terms of

[24] Telephone interview conducted by Margot Higgins on April 14, 2015

> *common sense. If you have lots of common sense you can adapt to anything.*

Despite the major economic and social challenges that have continued following wilderness designation, Ahtna people have continued their longstanding processes of adaptation from before the area became wilderness according to U.S. legislation. This man defines being poor according to a cultural value system that stands outside of mainstream U.S. market economy-based standards. According to Ahtna world views, 'poor' might entail the continuation of access to natural resources and it is not necessarily a disadvantage. This is a very different definition than that imposed by U.S values and NPS at a national level. "There is a certain spiritual component to a language that serves to ease trauma," he explained. Language "is what was washed away among [Native Alaskan children] at boarding schools," the last of which shut down in 1978. This is an example of "linguistic imperialism," or the imposition of the primary language of the colonizer (Kimmerer, 2015). English is a secular language and does little to heal society or address the larger structural disadvantages imposed by colonialism, displacement, and marginalization, he said.

At a broad scale this man spoke about the replacement of the Ahtna language by the "trade language," first imposed by the Russians and then by Americans. He claims that English, "a language of property," created a dichotomy between people and the natural world, where "it" becomes the object of humans and the idea that people are of greater value than nature. According to this view, the term wilderness in western language expresses this divide. The ideology and legislative aspect of wilderness also reinforces a property based market economy. This is reinforced by government institutions.

> *The English only language will always fair best under NPS. The federal government has no language of its own, except for regulatory language. They can leave regulations on the table and walk away. Conquering is the central American project. If they can't conquer by dividing a population they will conquer through assimilation.*

Wilderness, according to this individual, is an extension of Manifest Destiny, the assertion of U.S. imperialism and exceptionalism as it applied to the "unknown," reinforced and legislated by the State. Manifest Destiny involved redeeming and remaking the world in the image of the United States. Similarly this ideal was also expressed in the "save the last frontier" narrative from the pro-wilderness preservation movement of the 1970s. He critiques the "western tendency" to define their experience in wilderness in relation to the amount of time spent in wilderness. Indeed such a sentiment has been expressed by many well known wilderness preservation advocates including John Muir, Robert Marshall and David Brower, among others. By contrast, the Ahtnas experience language as a way of creating connections, rather than separating humans and nature, spirit and matter. It is generally recognized that if you are part of land there is no one word to describe that relationship. "The good lord would never give status of

caretaker of something unknown with out an intimate understanding. To say that wilderness exists is to say there is a godless preserve." In this case, the "good lord" refers to a spiritual god. According to Ahtna world views, this god makes no distinction between land, wildlife, and humans. The division of these areas imposed by Euro-Americans is also reflective of an entirely different set of values, those based on property, greed, and conquest.

In another similar case, a Native Alaskan Eyak elder[25] described wanting to have a more influential voice over park management decisions and the value of tribal language. She described the "Army of NPS" workers who instill wilderness values in the isolated surroundings of Yakutat, a coastal community on the Gulf of Alaska where her family has generations of experience on the land. Like the perspective shared by the Ahtna in the previous section, she emphasized the importance of Native Alaskan language over that of the state. "They have lost the importance of wilderness by not focusing on the language of our culture." Instead NPS needs to pay more attention to "descriptive language," she said. Like many other Native Alaskans I spoke with, she explained, "the English language is not able to cover the thoughts and world-views of our culture and the way we have experienced 'wilderness.'" She also spoke of the problems associated with the insensitivity of national NPS management and the high turnover rate of wilderness rangers.

> *They are never given a good orientation to the area and they come in with the same view as the previous ranger. They never learn it on their own. Their job priority is to protect animals, for example. We have had rangers threaten natives by trespassing on native traditional land.*

Despite this imposition by outside governing officials, she acknowledged that the problem has to do with the bureaucracy involved in wilderness designations and national park management. The above situation is not usually the fault of the individual NPS employee; they are shaped by the "upper echelons" of the agency. "[At the national level] NPS doesn't take into consideration the people they send to the Copper Basin," she said.

Such sentiment also reverberated among a Non-Native Alaskan in the same area. "As soon as you say you will preserve land or culture you have put it in jeopardy, because nothing is static," a former Fish and Game officer told me in Yakutat while filleting the king salmon he had caught that day on the tailgate of his truck. "I used to think [Native Alaskan] words had not evolved and that they would be stuck in time because they spoke a language that had not evolved. But then I realized that language can be an expression of an emotional state you do not want to lose."[26]

Non-Native Residents

[25] Interviewed by Margot Higgins on June 15 2013 in Yakutat, Alaska.
[26] Interview conducted by Margot Higgins on June 14, 2013.

Non-Native Alaskans, who have been in the area for a relatively short period of time, also critique NPS wilderness management, expansion, and the loss of access to traditional hunting grounds. Wilderness protection is often viewed as an imposition from the State that limits local practices. During and after the mining period, subsistence and guide hunting became a primary activity in the Wrangells. Hunters in the area often express that hunting is their way of being part of the wilderness and many people in this community were vehemently opposed to ANILCA.

Subsistence Users

"I was raised on a dairy farm in Pennsylvania and I wanted to live in a place with a life style that brings your roots back," said a woman who moved to a resident zone community that borders the park in 1973 in a phone interview while she was concurrently sewing a lynx fur hat from her home in Mentasta.[27] When the lynx fur market is good these hats, which are produced through her subsistence right to trap, add substantially to her income.

"It is not crazy that we have a park here, but I do not like what I have seen." Despite a much shorter time span living in the area, she echoes Native Alaskan narratives. "We were here before the park. Man is part of the ecosystem whether you like it or not." Older Alaska Natives also have negative feelings about NPS, she added. "They would have not rather seen it come." She claims that prior to 1978 the word "subsistence" did not exist in local dialogue. She also makes similar declarations about the long-term knowledge of non-native Alaskans as being as connected to the land as Native Alaskans. Claims to belonging influenced by increased national state rule and displacement also enter into her narrative. "People in the Mentasta area were basically hunting for food and then the park came and you were told immediately all NPS lands were closed to hunting. Alaskans became outraged." Among the subsistence-based rural Alaskans who opposed government intervention and park protection a popular narrative among them arose and they took action. "People got very non-conformist during the first two years and ignored that land has a different status."

Such narrative claims serve a political purpose. Strongly opposed to the wilderness designation and the land conversion involved in national park designation, this woman was one of 1500, primarily Non-Native Alaskans in the area, who organized to protest the establishment of the park in 1978. "I made a skunk hat with a wire sign that read NPS stinks," she recalls. As an effort to support what she referred to as the "Real Alaska Coalition," she went to DC to advocate for the cause of rural Alaskans who protested park and wilderness establishment. There she met a woman who had been working on promoting the passage of ANILCA for 11 years, yet had never set foot in the state. "In my book if

[27] Interview conducted by Margot Higgins on December 11, 2012.

you've never lived here, you are being told what to say and you don't know what you are talking about."

Like many rural Alaskans, she has since adjusted her narratives around the Park designation. She continues to be weary of the federal presence in her "back yard," but today works more closely with local NPS staff as an appointed advisor on the park's Subsistence Resource Council. "With negative feelings about park to start with we tried to use the legislation for subsistence and rural qualities to keep from losing it. The only way to get anything done is to work with it," she said. "As time has gone on working with NPS, for me the concern is that the national perspective of the national park has to be taught by local Park staff. NPS comes with a mindset we are not happy about and they are constantly getting new people. We need them to understand it is different here." Another issue she noted is that park biologists are typically in the area for two to three years and they need to be re-trained every time they are replaced. "They don't have first hand knowledge, and they are *only* reading science that came before them."

This woman acknowledges that some aspects of her relationship with NPS have improved, especially with longer-term employees. "I feel like [the cultural resource manager] is doing a better job to understand the people. She gives us ideas based on what we are saying." Claims to belonging, and long experience living in this place are used to justify a certain level of participation in shaping park policy. Nevertheless, this approach does not apply to every park resident. While in her opinion, new comers make strong claims to belonging, she contends that these residents of the park tend to lack long-term knowledge of human and ecological processes in the area. She was critical of the more recent arrivals to the area who obtain the privileges of rural residency after a single year. Many of these new comers stem from urban backgrounds and her opinion reflects an increasing rural and urban divide in Alaska. "As different people move in to places like Slana they do not realize how lucky that they are to qualify for subsistence. It is rare. That pits people against people because they just got here. I do not begrudge it, but I wish they could appreciate it. They are very fortunate that the opportunity exists."

A woman in her fifties[28] from the resident community Gakona, who also pre-dates park establishment, likewise expressed her frustration with the high replacement level of NPS staff, as well as the low level of involvement in the local community to address issues related to wilderness management under ANILCA. An instructor at the local community college, she explained the complicated dynamic between many long-term rural residents and NPS.

> *A lot of times, especially, in these rural communities, people get frustrated with federal bureaucracy, and you know after many years of the parks being new and the rules changing, people are just kind of separating, they do not want to really get involved. You do not have*

[28] Interview conducted by Margot Higgins in Glenallen, AK on August 16, 2012.

> *people really going over management plans or keeping an eye on what is going on because they just don't want to deal with it and they do not understand it. . . A lot of issues come up because there are big huge giant controversial or unknowns in ANILCA. NPS employees go away, sometimes three years later, and all of a sudden it is a policy. How did that happen?*

With what she describes as an optimistic approach, this woman has chosen to get more involved in park management. Like the woman in Mentasta, she serves as an appointee on the Subsistence Resource Council. "I think that the SRC is one way for local people to have a pulse of what local concerns are and to be able to bring that into a format through a mechanism that the NPS can take into consideration."

> *This is precedent setting. A lot of this stuff is brand new. . . . this park is brand new so all the plans they are just trying to update plans from 84. The park was created in 1980. It is still brand new 30 years later. Back country, front country, what is a front or back country plan? We are deciding that now. What is front country in [Wrangell-] St. Elias would be considered not front country in any other national park. This front country is totally different from the front country in Smokey Mountain National Park.*

Required by ANILCA, Subsistence Resource Councils in many Alaska national parks provide a process through which local subsistence users can have input into the management of subsistence resources in Wrangell-St. Elias. The purpose of the Commission is to recommend their observations and suggestions to the Governor of Alaska and the Secretary of the Interior.

Nevertheless, there is a strong prominence of Non-Native Alaskans who participate. At the time of this writing in 2015, there were just three Native representatives on the twelve person commission for Wrangell-St. Elias. Unlike the legislation for split Native and Non-Native influence over natural resources in next door Kluane National Park, there is no mandate for split participation in Alaska (Nadasdy, 2003). The knowledge that impacts management decisions is often "riddled with unexamined assumptions, different definitions of knowledge between Native and Non-Native governance, and uneven power relations (p.)

Local Outfitters

Sport hunting outfitters were among the most vehemently opposed to wilderness during the ANILA hearings. Today many claim their concerns were valid that wilderness designation has greatly reduced their access to wildlife resources and has had a negative impact on the non-human environment.

The following guide expressed the values, ethics and frustrations that the guiding community experienced following Park designation. "Hunting is just a way of

life," a sport fisheries biologist said during a 1980 interview in Copper Center. To many Non-Native rural Alaskans at Park conception, NPS management would put an end to their hunting access and unique rural lifestyle (Derenderfer and Walkinshaw 1981).

> *Rather than going to a movie, I go hunting. And it isn't the killing aspect that I like. It is the experience of going into the country, the experience of being part of the country. Now you can't get out and use the land. The only ones the land is for is the complete preservationists who want everything in nature to just sit and grow. . . They've taken away hunting from the people and it is wrong, completely wrong. I'm a conservationist. I believe in using the land, and killing an animal is part of using it. Some people think hunting is cruel but have they ever been to a slaughterhouse? NPS has cut 40 percent of my business and when you lose that much, life gets tough. I think it is a little unfair for Alaska to save the world and bear the burden of it. Why doesn't California take on some of the burden and preserve itself?*

According to this claim, human presence in wilderness maintains the area more so than degrading it, particularly though the attentive behavior of hunters and subsistence users. Nature and humans are integrated. These ideas continue to persist. Today, many hunters claim that Park establishment and increased regulations have diminished the health of wildlife populations, particularly caribou and sheep. They say that the biggest rams and bulls no longer exist, diminishing the genetic pool of the populations for reproduction of the species. Living in a cabin whose walls were covered with photos documenting decades of sheep, moose and bear expeditions that date back to the 1960s, another guide explained to me that recent park regulations require hunters to shoot Dahl sheep rams with a full curl on their horns, an activity that is nearly impossible with the traditional technique of identifying sheep, far from human sight capacity through the lens of a spotting scope. He also claimed that he had flown young park service biologists into the backcountry to study the health of wildlife populations. They conducted isolated studies, returned for a season or two, yet they never shared the results, he said.

Another hunting guide also indicated that his family has been able to maintain their stronghold in the guiding business, through park establishment and the increasing regulations that were involved. Today they are the only family with a permit to hunt in the Nabesna area, having persisted beyond several other Native Alaska and non-Native guides.

> *There has been a huge change from the beginning, you know, the protest marches and all the stuff you know that kind of started way back when, but there's a lot of people now that are actually kind of like me that are looking at it and saying okay what are the good points? You know what's happened here and then all of a sudden it's like okay you know I'm still allowed to be a guide and outfitter. I'm still allowed to be able to*

hunt and why its actually because of the park service. So I have to look at that and so that's changed and I know a lot of people are like oh they had the park service and whatever but it's not the hate hate the park service you know what I mean? They have changed you know what I mean and a lot more people are saying well I'm going to go out and see that park you know what I mean? And I don't think that—the mountains have always been there they've always known they've been there and then they're like well it's a park so it must be something special and I think that's finally starting to set into people and they're starting to say okay well it was set aside not just to cut me off you know and throw me out it was set aside because it was something special. I think that's starting to click in now to a lot of folks and you still got your old hardliners you know what I mean? You know it was always the deal we got to overthrow the park service and we got to run them out of this country and no matter what it takes to do it and blah blah blah. You don't hear that much anymore. . ."[29].

The following resident moved to the banks of the Chitina River with his wife in 1979, though his father had started a guiding business in the area in 1961. Of the national park establishment he said[30],

My dad thought you know as far as commercial activities and stuff it was over, because what he did was hunting mainly. He said' "well there goes the wilderness" and those have been very prophetic words its true you know I mean national park brings people, people change the wilderness.

Nevertheless he had other ideas. More strategic in responding to and negotiating with NPS, he has carved out a very successful hunting and ecotourism business.

We saw [park establishment] as recreational opportunity. I was more into mountain climbing and non-consumptive tourism I guess …so we saw a future in that and basically wanted to get along with the park service from day one. I can't say that any of us were just absolutely thrilled that it was a park, but also we saw the big picture and realized that it was going to be around a lot longer than we'd even be here. So we took the stance initially to get along with and invite them over here. We said 'hey you know 'come check us out' see if we're doing anything you don't like. We were way different than most [who] were very very antagonistic towards the park to the point where they weren't welcome anywhere. . . of course back then [the rangers] knew absolutely nothing, they didn't know the names of mountains, and rivers, and anything and we did so you know we been here a long time so they respected our knowledge I guess.

[29] *ibid*
[30] Interview conducted by Margot Higgins at the respondent's home on July 4, 2012.

As is the case with other rural residents, especially hunters, he was critical of the ineptitude of early NPS managers. He also spoke extensively about the ongoing frustrations he has recertifying his pilot's license with the Federal Aviation Commission with officers who have never flown in Alaska, let alone in the challenging terrain of the Wrangells. This sentiment was widely shared by other pilots in the area, all of whom have been flying for over 30 years: federal officials from out of state should not regulate local flight patterns that are very specific to the terrain of the Wrangells. This knowledge takes years of experience, which few can understand. Yet he also reflects a different kind of knowledge and strategy than that used by the Ahtna community. By contrast, the Ahtnas have experienced the termination of many of the hunting operations that they had established in the 1950s and 1960s due to new hunting boundaries that were created by park establishment. From one man's perspective, "Non-Native voices were the loudest at the negotiating table," for park establishment and they also have the dominant presence by far in SRC negotiations.

Today the construction of wilderness narratives from this non-Native individual reflects the enormous and very rare benefits he has received following park establishment. He now owns and operates an "exclusive wilderness experience" that entails a personal flight to a very upscale lodge and gourmet meals. This includes a tailor-made adventure and unlimited bush plane flights. "There's no itinerary," he writes on the website of his guiding operation. "Wilderness is the unexpected. We let nature lead us, so every day is different. We may fly up into a mountain valley, or put you down on a sandbar at the edge of the forest, and take you on a hike that literally no one has ever done before."

Thus, this very claim echoes the sentiment of previously unoccupied wilderness expressed in the Wilderness Act. In some high elevation areas, including the rugged 18,000 foot Mt. Saint Elias where he has led expeditions through air flight, this may be the case. Nevertheless, the belief also coincides with the binary concept of a people-less landscape that is widespread in national wilderness narratives and that resembles why Native Alaskans challenge this human/nature split that is part and parcel of the English language.

Other park residents who rely primarily on tourism challenge the mission and presence of NPS, yet also reinforce the duality between humans and nature. Interviewed outside the powerhouse from the mining era where his guiding business is now located the following individual has lived in McCarthy-Kennicott since 1998, the year NPS acquired Kennecott. Founded prior to park establishment in 1978, the guiding company he now owns offers hiking multi-day back packing trips, glacier touring and rafting. On its website this business markets itself using many of the same "superlatives" that are listed on the NPS site. The "wilderness" page reads:[31]

[31] This page can be accessed at: http://www.steliasguides.com/about-us/

> *We are based in McCarthy, at the heart of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and the largest preserved wilderness area on earth. This is Alaska at its finest, where you will find massive mountains, enormous glaciers, wild rivers and none of the crowds of Denali or the Kenai. We are the local experts on this vast wilderness and love to share it with our guests!*

A recent backcountry management plan, however, restricts his outfitting company from camping in an area where they have been bringing tourists for decades, due mainly to increasing bear safety concerns. These management plans are expanding with NPS currently in the process of developing a management plan for how these kinds of conflicts might be addressed in the area. At an October 2014 Subsistence Resource Council meeting, the NPS project manager explained that the park is getting started on a wilderness stewardship plan. This will cover the 9.2 million acres of designated wilderness in the area and address issues related to everyday park management – mainly cabins, airstrips, roads and visitor impacts.

This outfitter suggested that the increased presence of NPS has made it much easier for people to live in the community by developing more infrastructure such as bridges to attract more tourists. People who once offered carpentry skills at a local rate now charge high prices. He and others claimed that the local economy is being slowly replaced by market driven forces and the pace of remote mountain living has greatly increased. This presence which has also has adversely impacted the pace and quality of community interactions. A former sense of belonging is disappearing as NPS increases its presence in the community, he contends[32].

> *From late 70s on there was a natural filter: people need to work hard to be here. Hardship was the glue that bounded people together. People were forced to interact with those they do not like.*

Such a sense of place is legitimate on some level, reinforced by my experience and observations within this small community living in an isolated rural area. Many people show up to help one another out when a creek floods, a bear breaks in, or to help lug belongings to a cabin at the beginning of a season. This is part of the attraction to the community and I have watched many such interactions over the years. Nevertheless, while they may be shifting, this man suggests that the loss of the integrity of the community is in part due to the increased presence of NPS.

> *This has changed in the last ten years. We are moving into the third generation. We are at a crux time. Now it is easier to be here. You do not need to be nice to your neighbors. There are more cliques.*

Much of this statement, regardless of the accuracy, also reinforces to a degree the frontier myth about Alaska. Many Alaskans, such as those early community members he describes, regard themselves as resilient and independent, not

[32] Interview conducted by Margot Higgins in McCarthy on May 31, 2010.

needing interference from the federal government. It also reflects a common narrative claim in Alaska that longevity in the state earns the most respect and should have the most influence over governance.

I also spoke with a former NPS employee [33] who first visited the area in 1991, just over a decade following park establishment. Her sense of place is also contingent on a particular binary concept of living in the wilderness with little human interaction. Located a mile up McCarthy Creek, her hand built log cabin is intentionally hidden and removed from ATV access. To reach the cabin one walks or bikes for a mile out of town on a dirt road and looks for a barely visible footpath in the dryus vegetation. Next, one follows this footpath amidst a tangle of ATV marks around McCarthy Creek. At an enormous boulder where the trail wraps around a narrow washout, there is a ravens nest and ATVs can no longer get through.

We chatted informally while scraping off paint on her wooden deck, joined by her two sons who were under the age of five. A former interpretation employee of NPS, her views of the agency have shifted over the years:

> *NPS is totally undependable. At any moment [they] can hire someone from the lower 48. They are all about themselves. I am totally disillusioned by NPS. I am a preservationist but I have a hard time with them especially over the access issue. . .They make many decisions in a vacuum without consulting locals. It is modus operandi. They move into a small community and do things their way.*

While NPS has provided a reliable source of income in the community, this woman noted, the situation also allows a larger group of individuals –primarily young males in their twenties and thirties – to drink heavily. These men are less concerned about preservation, or at least traditional preservation values as they were traditionally defined by the wilderness movement, she claimed. According to her, the increased NPS presence and seasonal job creation has fueled a more motorized culture among the younger year-round locals who live on unemployment in the winter and travel to tropical places during their time off.

Wilderness advocate and long term resident

Fresh out of college, the following individual[34] came to the Wrangell-St. Elias in 1967. In 1973 as the newly appointed coordinator of the Environmental Studies Program at UC Santa Cruz, he recalled "there were concurrent efforts to engage students in field work and the preservation of wilderness that preceded and coincided with The Wilderness Act."

> *The culture that I came from was of mostly Seattle based wilderness oriented people trying to stop massive clear cut logging in the pacific*

[33] Interview conducted by Margot Higgins, at the subject's home in McCarthy, on June 8. 2012.
[34] Presentation at the Wrangell Mountains Center in McCarthy, Alaska, June 8, 2010

northwest and in that context there was not an appreciation or respect for local logging as an example. It wasn't part of the picture.

Like much of the wilderness movement, the preservation discourse in Wrangell St. Elias had been focused on preventing prospecting, road development, and further mining and timber extraction from occurring in the proposed area. Threatened by development, this was a place that needed to be protected from the adverse impact of people, the preservationists had argued. Beginning in 1971, he became involved in a UC Santa Cruz college program that consisted of scientists, conservation advocates, and a group of eager college students who were to inventory the natural and cultural resources of the park. He described the early intentions he had with regard to passing of ANILCA, in relation to the contentions around ANILCA today.

ANILCA was not are there going be six enforcement rangers, six backcountry rangers checking in on people in the backcountry? The question was whether there was going to be a mine in the Chitistone Canyon with a road accessing it with a bridge across the Kennicott River, the Nazina and to Glacier Creek with 200 people living at Glacier Creek and heavy truck traffic. That was the issue.

Later this man earned a PhD and started the college field program with the Wrangell Mountains Center in 1983. In 2010, during an interview, he reflected on his forty-year time span in the area. He asserted that the wilderness designation of ANILCA has led to the decreased "wildness" in the park.

Today the NPS has no awareness of the loss of wilderness in Alaska. I ask myself, did I do what I intended to do? We need to evaluate the success ANILCA in terms of the values of wilderness or of people's perceptions of wilderness. Icons of wilderness are still present in Alaska. John Muir and Bob Marshall did not walk into an uninhabited wilderness, but they were turned into icons. And they did not walk into an NPS landscape. Due to the NPS marine- like culture, a wilderness transition is happening blindly.

While his personal views about wilderness have shifted, for many years he has been working with agency managers to influence and curb development in his back yard. Now mostly retired, he is present at most community meetings. He claimed that there are more people living in the park and impacting the park's wilderness qualities than ever before. "The person you meet in a paint store in Anchorage gets a cabin and becomes local," he said. While he supports the interaction of people and wilderness, stemming from a preservation culture, he also expressed his frustration at the increasing rural and urban divide in the park.

A narrative that bothers me is of the local culture being displaced by the bureaucratic hegemony of the government imposition on locals. The purposes for which park was designated are way bigger than the 50 to

100 people who for various reasons have migrated for reasons they find attractive[35]

While he largely disagrees with the contestations to ANILCA by what he claims is a very small group of rural residents, he agrees that there have been negative consequences to wilderness that the wilderness movement did not anticipate.

That the meaning and value of wilderness has changed was also reinforced by another man who was closely involved in leading students in the park inventory He recalled his first visit to the area:

"We flew in non-stop from Seattle on the private leer jet Sierra Club had arranged and before landing we did a cirque of the Wrangells. I recall being as debilitated and mentally worn out as I'd ever been when we landed. There was too much to see, too much to take in. I could barely walk from the landing, the staging area on the runway, because I had had all of my fuses blown, just from the air.[36]*"*

Now a PhD scientist who visits the area every summer to conduct research, his views about wilderness preservation had also shifted.

In so many ways the "last best chance to protect wilderness" has been used up. It has been disappointing for me. NPS has an occupier's perspective to this landscape. The loyalty is not to the small sea, not to the landscape, the resources, not to the people, not to the knowledge of human evolution during the Pleistocene and what we can learn from that in the present. The NPS focus has been on NPS. I do not believe NPS has either tried or been successful in the past decade in having the staff which is locally rooted or where the loyalties are local to park policy in general. Senior staff has been rotated, has been re-assigned. There is a lack of continuity of commitment to sustain programs, including monitoring, but any kind of sustained program.

According to this individual, wilderness as it has been managed and interpreted by NPS has often had deleterious impacts on local ecology and local human consumption. Of these missing programs, he noted that there is no plan to provide a safe, reliable water supply in park communities, which have a very limited water table. By contrast when ecologically related problems happen, there is additional NPS regulation. Of the 50,0000-acre fire in 2009 he said:

Essentially there was a lot of overreaction to the fires from the NPS. The deal basically is that NPS contracts its fire suppression to state forestry, but they do not contract landscape evolution responsibilities to anyone. When the fire occurred the way things evolved was all about fire suppression and not about landscape evolution. There was no plan, no

[35] Interview conducted by Margot Higgins at the interviewee's home in Kennecott on August 11, 2012.
[36] Interview conducted by Margot Higgins in Berkeley on December 8, 2011

monitoring plan afterwards, no question about what are we going to learn from this. . . In short they had over 100 personnel here to protect three trappers cabins. There was a contract [with the state] and they controlled the landscape instead of the other way around. I'd like to see what the landscape has to offer.

By this view, the best management of wilderness is management that extends from paying close attention to the land, instead of distant bureaucratic reactionary management. There is currently no wilderness baseline in a dynamic landscape that NPS can respond to with a set of standard practices.

National NPS Narratives

Table 1 Park Superlatives

"Park Superlatives: Wrangell-St-Elias" [1]

- The largest wilderness area in the National Wilderness Preservation System.
- The largest national park in the United States.
- Designated as a World Heritage Site with Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve and the Canadian neighbors Kluane National Park Reserve and Tatshenshini-Alsek National Park. (Making this the world's largest international protected wilderness.)
- Four major mountain ranges: Wrangell, St. Elias, Chugach, and the eastern part of the Alaskan Range.
- Mt. St. Elias, at 18,008 feet, is the second highest peak in the United States.
- Nine of the 16 highest peaks in the United States.
- Mt. Wrangell, at 14,163 feet, is one of the largest active volcanoes in North America.
- The Nabesna Glacier, at approximately 80 miles, is the longest non-polar valley glacier.
- The Malaspina Glacier, larger than the state of Rhode Island, is the largest non-polar piedmont glacier in North America.
- The Hubbard Glacier is one of the largest and most active tidewater glaciers in North America.

By contrast to the experience of local residents, national park and wilderness policy measures continue to persist with sharp divisions in the framing of humans as separate from a form of nature that they have "dominated," "conquered," or "protected (Neumann, 1999)." The central wilderness narrative of NPS in Wrangell St. Elias reinforces these national NPS preservation narratives (Table 1). On the main Wrangell-St. Elias website there is little mention of human interaction with this landscape or history. The "Park

Superlatives," featured on the home page disregard the wide spectrum of narratives related to traditional livelihoods in the Park. This prominent message is embedded in national values of traditional wilderness preservation that are geared toward attracting tourists. This advertisement is very telling about the extent to which national level NPS disregards living residents at a local level.

In subsequent pages the site includes a brief nod to the mining era, and Native Alaska communities, but nothing of the present communities living within the Park. Beyond a photograph of current park employees, there is virtually no information about current park staff on the site, what their accomplishments have been, and how they have been engaged in cultural and natural resource management. Like NPS at a national level, there is a high replacement of these employees, with the exception of cultural and natural resource management and a couple of unusually situated rangers. In addition, as many of the interview subjects note, there has been a high fluctuation among park staff, particularly among park superintendents. There have been eight superintendents since park establishment in 1980, or an average employment period of less than four years.

Local NPS Narratives

Local NPS narratives reveal more complexity and blurry lines between local and national NPS narratives, and the ways that natural and cultural resource governance does not operate in monolithic ways. These local employees have also contributed to "inhabited wilderness," through their own experience living in or close to the Park. This has influenced them to be much more sensitive and responsive to local resistance.

Those local NPS employees that have worked in the Park for more than a couple of seasons share a greater commitment to their jobs and participation in local practices. Like park residents, the more permanent staff reflected changing and expanding views about wilderness by comparison to the national NPS model. In fact, these employees often spoke of being constrained by national preservation standards. They also expressed frustration about decreased NPS funding, which is felt the most at the local park level, and the fact that regional and national decisions, particularly those related to the restoration of Kennecott that has cost millions of dollars (which I will discuss in Chapter Two) were often made with little input from local NPS employees. Contrary to popular opinion among my interview subjects in the Park, NPS employees in Wrangell St. Elias, primarily those in cultural and natural resource management, are long-standing staff members who have been living in park communities for over a decade. These NPS managers and rangers have adapted many local practices such as fishing and hunting in their own lives and expressed a much greater awareness about the concerns of park residents. Nevertheless, many of these residents do not live in the most visited communities of McCarthy and Kennecott.

Cultural Resource Management

A skillful crafts woman with an impressive collection of hand-spun felt hats, mittens and socks, among other creations, the cultural anthropologist and subsistence specialist at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve has worked for NPS since 2002. As coordinator of the park's subsistence program, she helps manage subsistence use of the wild game, fish, and plants in the park by Alaska Natives and other rural Alaskans and coordinates research on resource use patterns. "When Congress passed the enabling legislation that allowed establishment of many national parks in Alaska, it recognized that use of the natural resources is very important for the people who live here, and it allowed residents to have the opportunity to continue a subsistence way of life," she says. "In some cases there are no alternative resources. For example, if I go to the local grocery store, it's hard to buy fish, so I get it out of the river next to my house" (Wright, 2009).

As long as resources and their habitats are maintained in a "natural and healthy state," traditional subsistence hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering are allowed in the park and preserve under the provisions of ANILCA. So as part of her role, she works with the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park Subsistence Resource Commission, a committee of local residents established to advise the park on subsistence. She also works with the federally recognized Non-Native Alaskans who are affiliated with the park, and organizes regular meetings with the tribal councils of the tribes that have formal government-to-government agreements.

Underlying the "superlative" wilderness descriptions is a landscape of indigenous human habitation, she said. "To the [Alaska] Native peoples, this area is not wilderness but rather their historic home, an area crisscrossed by trails and travel routes where they and their ancestors lived, traveled, hunted, fished, trapped, and gathered ..." (*ibid*, 2009). Although many rural residents of the park are employed through the market economy and patterns of resource use have changed, subsistence hunting and fishing continue to contribute substantial amounts to their diet. These activities also sustain cultural values of sharing, the appropriate treatment of animals, and respect and appreciation of elders (La Vine and McCall-Valentine, 2014).

As the park's cultural anthropologist, she also manages research on rural park residents, including ethnographic overviews and assessments of Alaska Native groups. Within Non-Native Alaskans, especially those with little income and who live in isolated communities with little access to a grocery store subsistence use is also very high. "Our social science within NPS needs to relate to subsistence economies and what subsistence looks like at the local level, documenting traditional relations to the park," she explained in an interview (*ibid,* 2009*)*.

This cultural resource manager makes links between food and cultural identities to the traditions mainstream U.S. culture can relate to. "Sometimes I use the

example of serving turkey at Thanksgiving," she says. "Traditional foods are part of who Alaska Natives are and the heritages they are celebrating. Sharing meals forges bonds among members of a family, community, and the different generations. "People work together to hunt moose and share it with the rest of the community," she explains. "They share with elders who can no longer hunt and with family members who have moved to the city. Young people interact with and learn from their elders." (i*bid,* 2009).

During her employment with NPS at Wrangell-St. Elias, she has been on friendly terms with some park residents. "Getting to know some of the folks in the local communities, particularly in some of the Native villages, has been really interesting," she says. "Occasionally I provide technical assistance to communities in writing proposals for changes in subsistence-use regulations, and when I am able to look at a traditional practice and put that into regulation, it is rewarding."[37] She has also gained some traction in the Non-Native community. One long time rural resident stated,[38] "I feel like [this woman] is doing a better job to understand the people. She gives us ideas based on what we are saying."

Park Geologist

The recently retired park geologist reflected an awareness and understanding of the tensions that exist between NPS and the community over issues surrounding wilderness establishment[39]. He acknowledges that there are larger structural issues at play.

> *Open transparency is a liberating thing. We need to be able to modify NPS interactions with the community. We need to revise the idea of conservation. The nature of the beast is that the agency wants to be in control. National NPS feels it is at risk.*

This risk includes the possibility that such modifications could dismantle the founding mission of the agency of preserving natural and cultural resources "unimpaired," a direct contradiction to "inhabited wilderness". He also noted the lack of wilderness management by NPS, the misallocation of Park resources and the uneven support that the restoration of Kennicott has received (see cultural resource management chapter).

> *This park should have six wildlife biologists and it only has one. The biggest division should be resources, (including wilderness management,) Instead, the resources are the biggest in interpretation and maintenance.*

Park Superintendent

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[38] Telephone interview conducted by Margot Higgins on 12.11.2012.
[39] Phone Interview conducted by Margot Higgins on February 8, 2012

When interviewed, the Park Superintendent a tall slim athletic man in his fifties who was formerly the head ranger in Yosemite,[40] spoke of his life-long love for Alaska and the fact that he had wanted to work there for decades. To make this happen, however, he added that he took a substantial pay cut and extended his time until retirement. Echoing the NPS website, at the beginning of our interview he spoke of the "superlatives" that are Alaska and its unique (non-human) environment. But he also carefully spoke of the integration he experienced with the local park communities.

> *I anticipated public meetings, people coming to the office with questions, but you end up talking to people about everything and anything. The issues are important to people subsisting in winter in a small community. I have attended public meetings with most people there in a hall that I have helped heat. . . when we are pushing paper in an office we may not realize the importance of subsistence. The Ahtna are high on my list . . . When you do not have access to something you need in order to survive. I did not anticipate the gut level stuff that needs to be dealt with.*

He too expressed a similar desire to engage with the local community, despite the national imperative for NPS employees to avoid close relationships with local people. This superintendent was keenly aware of the steady replacement rate of NPS superintendents. He expressed sensitivity to the dilemmas that situation created when building local trust and buy in. Yet from a regional perspective the superintendent reported that he received the following priorities from the regional director: 1) the Kennecott McCarthy area and former mining infrastructure as the most visited area of the park, 2) relationships and 3) the Off-Road-Vehicle Environmental Impact Statement (which was underway at the time of the interview).

Park Ranger

Other non-resource management employees have been well integrated in local Park communities. Originally from Alabama, a longstanding park ranger[41] first came to Alaska when he was in college. With a good reputation among most locals he has served as a park ranger since 2003, and as a community member in McCarthy since 1999. "It was very helpful to actually be connected in the community before I started working as the law enforcement ranger," he said.

Drawn by the McCarthy community, "a small town at the foot of a glacier in our biggest national park," he recalls that fitting into the community was not an overnight process. The 1999 purchase of his cabin from an old timer in the community, involved a week-long visit to the community, at her requirement, to meet a "laundry list" of 15 friends.

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[40] Interview conducted by Margot Higgins at the NPS office in Copper Center on July 20, 2012
[41] Interview conducted by Margot Higgins in McCarthy, Alaska on July 20, 2012

> "*You're not just buying a cabin you're buying into a community you know", he said. " If you don't like these people you don't have any business living in McCarthy." And I said "well that's fair you know" and she, she wanted to know my life story and I felt fairly obligated to give it to her.*

Four years later, despite the fact that most locals were not in favor of having any permanent NPS presence in the community they also realized that the hire of this ranger was their best option. As one community member stated:

> *The park service is going to have a protection ranger here sooner or later and we would prefer it to be somebody that actually had something to do with this place, you know, knows about this place, cares about this place.*

Thus, unlike most NPS rangers, he was able to integrate a careful balance between national park wilderness preservation policy and being a respected member of the local community. "This is not a normal NPS situation. You usually don't have communities, private communities within parks" he commented. When national park and local management issues are raised at the McCarthy Area Council meetings, I watched this ranger engage local solutions. For example, to curb off-road vehicle use from tourists at the local footbridge, he suggested installing a hand painted sign expressing the values that define a community that is free of off-road-vehicle access.

From the very inception of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, however, rangers were tormented by local people in rural Alaska communities. In 1978 local protests swept across the region and effigies of President Carter, who had initially established the area as a preserve through the Antiquities Act were set to fire. Local resistance to the NPS was strong, from bull-dozer operator, hunter and back to the lander alike, as captured in John McPhee's (1977) bestselling book about that era in Alaska, *Coming into the Country*.

Today, NPS management also reflects the uneven influence of local residents whose voices were the loudest when Wrangell-St. Elias National Park was established. Early NPS documents refer to much of the (Euro-American) pre-park hunting and guiding community as a "fraternity." In a 1981 letter written by the superintendent of Wrangell-St. Elias, newly appointed park rangers were instructed to "avoid lighting a media fire," and to compliment local guides and hunters for a successful season. Local NPS staff was prohibited from engaging in subsistence activities:

> *We will be under extreme public scrutiny. We cannot appear to have conflict of interest. Our words and actions will be examined critically for real or imagined sensitivity*. [42]

[42] Wrangell St.-Elias Historic Administrative Records, 1959-1999 ACC WRST-00214, NPS Headquarters, Copper Center, Alaska

Thus, although locals have become far more integrated in Park communities they are still impacted by the ongoing opinions of Park residents.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the shifting views of wilderness by a variety of actors in Wrangell-St. Elias and how these residents have shaped the experience of "inhabited wilderness." I have also considered how levels of power have played out in the shaping this experience. Ironically, Native Alaskans who have the longest history of living in wilderness, and whose "traditional" experience influenced the inclusion of inhabited wilderness in the ANILCA legislation have had limited influence in shaping this process, even though this dynamic is recognized by local NPS employees.

There are a number of ways that wilderness designation in Wrangell-St. Elias has played out according to local narratives: wilderness was imposed by environmentalists and legislators from the lower 48; both Native and Non-Native Alaskans claim they had little voice over the process; that it has removed community control and self determination; and that NPS manages from DC with little good science or interaction with community members. Most local residents, Native and non-Native, reported that ecological conditions including the availability of subsistence resources, clean water and healthy forests have declined following wilderness designation. The measure of health of these resources is determined by national conservation priorities over local needs or knowledge. Nevertheless, with the exception of a few local residents, most do not recognize that from the inception of the Park, local NPS managers have worked against the weight of the deeply engrained social histories related to wilderness.

Those residents who have the most power have in large part dictated these "contemporary specifications." I have demonstrated that Native Alaskans have not received adequate benefits from Park establishment, especially as measured by the market economy. The transformation of power relations related to wilderness was precipitated by a variety of historically specific conditions, including settler colonialism, resource extraction, displacement and loss of Native Alaskan language. Definitions of wilderness might shift, but more powerful players in the park also build these definitions to their own benefit from NPS wilderness policy. Narrative claims about wilderness by non-Native Alaskans have greater influence over federal management, further reinforcing the impact of the marginalized conditions of Native Alaskan people. Wilderness designation according to many Native Alaskans has perpetuated an extended form of imperialism and colonialism.

Throughout these narratives, there is evidence that despite shifting ideas about wilderness, certain definitions of wilderness have become engrained and also mythologized in local culture. The experience of conceptualizing wilderness among most residents in Wrangell-St. Elias has shifted substantially over time, often reinforcing or expanding power relations between Non-Native Alaskans

and the relationship of residents to the NPS. Many of these wilderness views have to do with economic success, a strong sense of place belonging, a frontier mentality and the continuation or termination of traditional livelihoods. While the politics of wilderness in Wrangell-St. Elias is shaped by the political, economic, and social histories, it is also wrapped up in the particular histories and beliefs about connection to place.

At the same time, similar wilderness narratives are shared among Park residents. Those in favor of federal management, as well as those opposed to it, all claim a powerful connection to their home in Wrangell St. Elias and a strong sense of belonging. They often call for maintaining many aspects of their pre-park rural livelihoods, even if their practices do not follow this claim. Central to the critique of wilderness from most Park residents, is the management of NPS, even though several NPS individuals at the local level are working to remedy the situation. That the direction of this agency continues derive from D.C. and the regional level has been the root of many conflicts and shifting interpretations of wilderness. At the same time, there are semi-uniform narratives of resistance from both communities. Both Alaska Native and non-Native narratives that respond to wilderness, share a certain moral economy and resistance to the NPS – whether they are accurate or not. Many of these narratives critique NPS for high staff-turn over rates, poor scientific methodology, inadequate management plans, and little local presence in park communities.

Local NPS employees have been receptive to the needs of Park residents. While most national park employees manage from a distance in Wrangell-St. Elias, they have also lived in wilderness. These local employees are more sympathetic to local needs because they are engaged in local practices. In Wrangell-St. Elias narratives show how both local residents and the federal government have actively shaped an "inhabited wilderness." ANILCA has allowed Park residents to shape what a living wilderness should look like through their engagement with NPS employees, use of narratives, and participation in public meetings, particularly the Subsistence Resource Councils. Many have learned to use wilderness narratives and engagement with NPS to their economic advantage. Yet such benefits have played out less favorably in the Ahtna community.

Although Wrangell-St. Elias is a peopled landscape, ideas about the separation of wilderness and people persist there and throughout the state. Anchorage is still home to many of organizations that pushed the wilderness binary in the 70's and today, including the Sierra Club, Center for the Alaska Environment and the Wilderness Society. Wilderness narratives of local residents in Wrangell-St. Elias often contradict this national discourse. At the same time, the experience of these residents in a living wilderness system may contribute to the mainstream environmental movement by demonstrating through on the ground experience that national wilderness management strategies have adverse impacts on local livelihoods, place identity and negative conceptions of wilderness, including from those who advocated this protection.

These narratives on wilderness are intertwined in the narratives regarding the cultural and natural resource management and subsistence in subsequent chapters.

Figure 6 Former Kennecott mining town

Chapter Two: Prospecting for Buried Narratives

What shall we do with our histories?

*We must confess our histories. We must acknowledge our histories. We must remember our histories. It is only after those things are done that we can begin to heal, and to communicate with one another as the equals that we are. Let us tell each other stories that underscore the parallel nature of our lives. Let us tell each other stories that value the evident relationship in our condition. Let recognition and respect and knowledge to travel in both directions***.**

–Ernestine Hays, Tlingket Elder, Professor University of Alaska SE

In Alaska's Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, through narratives told on the Internet, in tourist brochures, on roadside interpretive signs, and by park staff, the National Park Service (NPS) tells a familiar boom-and-bust narrative that is focused on the area's brief industrial mining era from 1900-1938. One of those larger narratives relayed by the NPS and a number of local park residents celebrates the railway, developed by the Kennecott Corporation to take some of the richest copper ore in the world from its origins in the Wrangell Mountains to the coast in Cordova. Built by New York capital investors and thousands of workers, who laid 196 miles of tracks around glaciers, across canyons, and through deep snow and avalanche areas, the railroad carried 200 million tons of copper ore from 1911 to 1938, when the Kennecott mines closed. It

was copper from Kennecott, carried by these corporate trains on this treacherous route, that charged the nation with a new form of electricity at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Figure 7 Copper Northwest Railway circa 1915 Credit: Ron Simpson

In the summer of 2011, the railway completion story was conveyed during a weekend-long centennial celebration that included a historical slide show, a reenactment of the railroad opening, a period dress party, and tea and cake on the lush lawn of an up-scale local lodge. Just a few days before the festivities, the local historical museum and the NPS added to the agenda a dance recital to be performed by local Ahtna children, most of whom are now living in low-income residential communities outside of park boundaries. At the conclusion of a performance that held the close attention of a packed lecture hall of park residents and tourists, the Interpretive Supervisor for Wrangell-St. Elias bestowed a gift upon the Ahtna people: a copper railroad spike. His intentions very well may have been a sincere effort to demonstrate a gesture of appreciation for the time, travel, and years of practice involved in the performance, but such an offering might also be interpreted as another sharp nail in a long concealed coffin of cultural erasure.

Figure 8. Railroad Centennial Ahtna Dance Performance, 2011

In this chapter, I will argue that with regard to cultural resource management, at a national level, NPS focuses on a static narrative to boost tourism, instead of focusing on the ongoing living culture of the landscape. Local narratives from both Native and non-Native Alaskans have had little traction in revealing their experience in an inhabited landscape. I examine the cultural specificity of the Kennecott mining narrative, how particular histories have been left out of mainstream narratives of the area, and consider some of the larger consequences of that erasure.

What follows is a narrative account of the material and discursive relationships between NPS, local peoples of Euro-American descent, indigenous Alaskans, and the construction of the area's mining history, human history and natural history.

Theoretical Framing

Critical theorist Bruce Willems-Braun (1991) has argued that streams of past colonialism continue to infuse the present. He developed the influential idea of "buried epistemologies " or the conception that certain patterns of thinking are inherited and often contribute to unacknowledged discrimination and social inequity. Euro-American theories of knowledge, in particular, have often inherited from exclusive colonial ways of making sense of the world. I argue that narratives, by the state, tourists and to some extent non-Native residents in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, reveal such buried epistemologies and create a degree of ongoing violence and displacement, particularly toward Alaska native peoples. As Jake Kosek (2006) argues, people remake the past through their memories and they bring these meanings to bear on present conditions. To compare these past and present perspectives, Julie Cruickshank (2001) contends that narratives, particularly in the form of oral histories "provide an observatory from which to assess the shifting boundary from what we call *history* and what we call *myth*." She argues that "interpretive frameworks are continually recast to meet contemporary specifications," (2005, p.248) Paying attention to these narratives can provide more insight into the present. Carolyn Finney (2014) builds on Cruikshank's work, claiming that narratives "inform our environmental interactions and shape the institutions concerned with environmental issues." Thus, narratives may provide more insight into intentional or non-intentional decisions made by NPS, as one institution through which we can view the continued presence of colonialism and the ways that it continues to shape national perceptions that reinforce discrimination and inequality.

Narratives can be a critical angle through which we can examine the disconnect between what locals and the NPS think about cultural history and the particular management responses to historic events, expanding the existing analysis of these interactions. As the critical parks literature details, the history of the ideals of preservation and nationalism that surround the establishment of parks are simultaneous with and contingent upon the displacement of both white settlers

on indigenous lands and the previous colonial intrusions that made these dispossessions possible (Chase, 1987, Spence 1999, Runte, 2000, Solnit, 2000). Wrangell-St. Elias is no exception to this colonial past, but through this case, I examine how this history plays out in an additional way by which certain narratives gain prominence and others are erased.

I write this chapter with an awareness that many NPS employees in Wrangell-St. Elias have good intentions within their attempts to manage cultural resources, and that on many levels local decisions are out of their immediate jurisdiction. Most of the decisions regarding the large agency investment in Kennecott have been made on regional and national scales. On an individual level, a number of Park Service employees are well respected within many Park communities and have received local awards for their efforts to elevate living narratives. Nevertheless, as a federal institution and also a regional and local land manager, NPS does not always realize the politics of narrative and the larger implications of those narratives. This examination is critical to informing a better understanding of how to manage living histories and experience within a cultural landscape.

National Influence on NPS Kennicott Narrative

Despite the promises of ANILCA for the recognition of local livelihoods, NPS continues to elevate the Kennecott mining story, reinforcing a strong narrative tension between Americans from the lower 48 and park residents. NPS narratives on the website and as told by interpretive material throughout the Park, focus on this small slice of the Park's history. Many aspects of the Park that have been constructed by NPS and others to be attractive to tourists are incommensurate with the history of locals and their interests in the area. Northern frontier narratives surrounding the mining era and the railroad in Wrangell-St. Elias have become smoothed over, "Disneyfied," and normalized in the process of attracting national park visitors. These mining narratives increasingly comply with some of the commercial tourism and development interests of local residents who have benefitted from the establishment of the park. In 2013, tourism was the second largest private sector employer, accounting for one in eight Alaska jobs.

On the website for Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, there is a rotating "Did You Know" banner at the bottom of each page. This page, which is designed primarily for tourists, barely mentions living human histories. There also is a large emphasis on the Euro-American adventurers, explorers and scientists whose "discoveries" most often negatively impacted Native Alaskans. The frontier narrative is again celebrated. I gathered the following banner statements from this site:

Table 2. Did you Know?

• Historic Kennecott is the site of the purest copper discovery on the face of the planet. In 1900, prospector Jack Smith exclaimed, "...I've got a mountain of copper up there."

• The Kennecott mill town and mines are an extraordinary relic from America's past. The impressive structures and artifacts that remain represent an ambitious time of exploration, discovery, and technological innovation.
• The Nabesna River was named in 1898 by USGS employees W. J. Peters and A. H. Brooks. The name is derived from the local native name for the Upper Tanana River.
• Mt. Blackburn, a 16,390' peak in the Wrangell Mountains, was named by Lt. Henry T. Allen in 1885 for U.S. Senator Joseph Blackburn.
• Battling snowstorms during most of her 33-day climb, team leader Dora Keen, along with team member George Handy, was the first to summit 16,390' Mt. Blackburn. A famous 1912 Saturday Evening Post article, entitled "First Up Mount Blackburn", was written by Keen shortly following her amazing feat.
• 12,010' Mt. Drum was first climbed on June 4, 1954 by Heinrich Harrer, Keith Hart, and George Schaller. You may recall Heinrich Harrer as the principle figure in the book "Seven Years in Tibet".
• Mount Churchill, a 15,638' volcanic peak in the St. Elias mountain range, was named by the Alaska State Legislature in 1965 shortly following the death of English statesman Sir Winston Churchill.
• Mount Bona, a 16,421' peak in the St. Elias range, was named in 1897 by Italy's Duke of the Abruzzi for his racing yacht, the Bona. The Duke, grandson of the first king of Italy, was the first person to climb towering 18,008' Mount St. Elias, from which vantage point he could view Mt. Bona.
• Hubbard Glacier, one of the largest and most active tidewater glaciers in North America, was named in 1899 for Gardiner G. Hubbard (1822-1897), the first president of the National Geographic Society.
• The Root Glacier was named by Oscar Rohn, U. S. Geological Survey Geologist, in 1899 for U. S. Secretary of War Elihu Root (1845-1937).
• Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve has 14,185 square miles of designated wilderness, more than any other unit within the National Park Service system.
• The fishwheel, today a common means of harvesting salmon on Alaska's Copper River, first appeared in North America in Eastern North Carolina, where it was used to catch shad on the Roanoke and Pee Dee Rivers.
• Fireweed derives its name from the fact that it is one the first plants to spring up after a fire and during fall its leaves become inflamed with bright red and orange colors.
• The Bagely Icefield, a whopping 127 miles in length, is the largest sub-polar icefield in North America.
• Mt. Sanford (16,237'), in the Wrangell Mountains, was named by Lt.

Henry T. Allen in 1885 for his great grandfather, Rueben Sanford
• Towering 16,237' Mt. Sanford was first climbed on July 21, 1938 by Terris Moore and Bradford Washburn.
• In March, 1948, Northwest Flight #4422 slammed into 16,237' Mt. Sanford, killing all 30 on board. The wreckage was immediately concealed by ice and snow, making recovery efforts impossible. It was 50 years later until wreckage parts surfaced on a glacier, miles from the crash site.
• The Malaspina Glacier is largest piedmont glacier in North America and is larger than the state of Rhode Island.
• Caribou often travel high into the mountains in the summer to rest on patches of remaining snow and ice, where they can escape clouds of biting insects.
• Those allergic to poison ivy, poison oak, or poison sumac can wander the Alaskan landscape without concern. There are no such species in the entire state.
• Alaska and Russia are neighbors! At the closest point, the two are separated by just 55 miles. The Bering Sea divides the land masses.
• The Malaspina Glacier, larger than Rhode Island, was named in 1874 for Capt. Alejandro Malaspina, an Italian navigator who, in service to Spain, explored the northwest coast of North America in 1791.
• The Klutina River's name is derived from the Ahtna native word, Khlu ti tna, meaning "glacial river".
• The village of Glennallen derives its name from the combined last names of Capt. Edwin F. Glenn and Lt. Henry T Allen, both instrumental in the early exploration of the of the Copper River Basin.
• Scientists believe that our chattering little forest friend, the red squirrel, is the first mammal proven to have the ability to adapt to our warming climate in just a few generations. Females have been able to shorten their gestation period , normally 36-40 days, by as much as 18 days.
• The state of Alaska has 33,904 miles of coastline, more than the rest of the United States combined!
• Wrangell-St. Elias National Park is a paradise for backcountry travel. Although there are few maintained trails, there are many primitive "routes" through the wilderness.
• You can stroll along an original section of the Valdez Trail, an historic pack route to Interior Alaska, at the Wrangell-St. Elias visitor center at Copper Center.
• The Alaska Pipeline, built during the 1970's, stretches 802 miles from the oilfields of Prudhoe Bay to the tanker loading facility at Valdez.
• More than just a National Park, Wrangell-St. Elias, along with Glacier Bay, Kluane National Park, and Tatshenshini-Alsek

Provincial Park make up a 24 million acre World Heritage Site, one of the largest protected areas on earth.
• Moose are the largest member of the deer family, with large mature bulls standing 7 feet tall at the shoulders and weighing 1600 pounds.
• Locals know that winter is almost here when the Fireweed plant is in bloom all the way to the top bud.
• Some species of shrews, the smallest of all mammals, weigh as little as 5/100 ounce, or half the weight of a penny.
• Vast, rugged, icy, and wild, Wrangell-St. Elias provides for lifetimes of discovery, reflection, recreation, and adventure.
• With a population of approximately 950,000 animals, the number of caribou far exceeds the number of humans in Alaska.

The focus here is almost entirely on the natural history based superlatives that characterized the narratives of the preservation movement. When these narratives do include human histories they are almost entirely cast from a western European perspective. State narratives by NPS are intertwined with other dominant narratives about the north, which have been long imagined by the dominant western culture as a vast, pristine, sparsely inhabited place. "The last frontier" has been imagined as a place of boom and bust, as exemplified by the fur trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, copper and gold in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and oil in the present era. Many of these false notions are reinforced rather than expanded or challenged by the NPS. Tourists, especially out-of-state tourists with the substantial economic means to visit the park often by air flight, may have pre-conceived notions about Alaska long before they ever set foot there. These ideas have been drawn from popular literature such as the frontier mining narratives of Jack London and Robert Service, or the early naturalist writings of John Muir, Olaus and Margaret Murie, Robert Marshall and others (Kolin 2001).

Several scholars have examined how an ongoing frontier mentality applies to national park management and how indigenous voices have been left out (Chase, 1987, Spence 1999, Runte, 2000, Solnit, 2000). Yet they have not adequately examined how NPS narratives that reinforce national myths and identities for the sake of tourism combine with local narratives and responses. Re-synthesizing the interaction between these narrative scales may allow for a more thorough interpretation of the connections between national parks, past and ongoing human displacement and uneven economic gain.

Absent From The NPS Narrative Frame

While the boom and bust Kennecott narrative may be impressive to some, it obscures alternate narratives that describe the ongoing interaction between the "living" human and non-human world. This narrative only recognizes a particular slice of human history and works conveniently to direct tourists to particular

parts of the large protected wilderness area –the non-wild. Just down the hill from the historic Kennecott Recreation Hall where the centennial celebration took place, the glaciers that parallel the community are rapidly shrinking. During the mining era and well into the 1960s, local residents were not able to see across the panoramic valley and glacial highway that today's tourists marvel at, due to the recent glacial retreat of several hundred feet. Archival photographs too reveal that the physical landscape has changed dramatically. Nevertheless, very little of this visible land change is incorporated in the park interpretive signs in Kennecott. The first sign one views when ascending the hill that precedes the community entrance is a brand new polished sign marking the Kennicott mining town – in copper.

At the same time the NPS investment in Kennecott indirectly commemorates the ability of industry, technology and modernity to overcome "natural" obstacles such as crossing glaciated terrain in the far northern environment, contradicting the agency's mission of preservation, and obfuscating the ongoing living history in the area. Just as wilderness designation has become an ideology based on an imaginary sense of a people-less landscape, the NPS emphasis on the Kennecott mining history has erased the post mining era, pre-park establishment interim history and oversimplified a multifaceted ongoing socio-ecological history in the area. While the height of the industrial age is revered, NPS does not invite scrutiny to the consequences of unmitigated industrialization and the recent history and human experience of the area remain largely unexamined in NPS literature and interpretation. Based on the current content of the interpretative material offered in Kennecott, one might suppose that the human history of the area largely ceased in 1938 when the Kennecott mines closed, and that little human history preceded the mining era.

The history of mining and human experience in the Wrangells did not end when the last train pulled out of Kennecott. An account of the period that followed copper mining has yet to be offered in detail by NPS, however. Understanding the interaction of the area's colonial history and this time period helps us better understand contemporary park identities and relations as well as ongoing disputes over park boundaries and access. NPS does not always recognize the diversity of the social relations within Wrangell-St. Elias Park or acknowledge the intimate relations that both indigenous and non-indigenous people have to each other as well as the non-human environment, especially among those who pre-date the establishment of the park. There is little distinction made between people who have been living in the area for centuries or decades and the recent influx of recent arrivals and second homeowners. The period I examine here is one in which white rural Alaskans, often known as "outlaws" as well as "back to the landers," were engaged in similar hunting and subsistence practices as Native Alaskans, and often gleaned their skills and knowledge of the land from the Native Alaska communities around them, expanding on the cultural exchanges that occurred during the mining era.

Non-Native Alaska Cultural and Historic Narratives

The interim period between mining and park establishment is an important history that has been virtually erased by the dominant NPS mining narrative around Kennecott. Following the closure of the copper mines in the late 1930s, the termination of the Kennecott company town, and the quick disintegration of a railroad which was never built to last, virtually all of the remaining people who were previously connected to Kennecott became increasingly reliant not only on prospecting and small scale mining, but also on fishing, gardening, hunting, and other subsistence related activities.

Prior to park establishment, many of the communities of Wrangell-St. Elias had been a place where people could "choose to live on their own terms," as national parks scholar Joseph Sax (1980, p ii) put it. In the Wrangells, "[rural residents] have the option to choose their own way of life…they have a wide ambit of freedom to live according to their own rhythms, close to the natural world, self reliant to a much greater degree than most people, where distance, weather and isolation demand harmony and cooperation far beyond the average."

As copper prices dropped in the 1920s and 1930s, much of land in what is now the national park became a "free for all" for those people who were attracted to a self-sufficient lifestyle, along with those who wanted to live in a space with little government regulation. Failing to fully recognize the lessons and skills they gleaned from Native Alaskans, those who remained in the area, as well as those who streamed in from other parts of Alaska and the lower 48, also soon found supplementary ways to support themselves. Windows, cans of food, dishes and utensils were looted form the former mines. Land was cheap. For example, one old timer who arrived in the area in 1953 purchased several buildings in downtown McCarthy for less than a hundred dollars.

Figure 9. Local resident setting up a sprinkler system to protect his property from wildfire.

Another community of primarily Euro-Americans also trickled into the area, not solely for its remaining mineral riches, but also for an increasingly rare opportunity: The ghost towns of Kennecott and nearby McCarthy offered the possibility to live a life in a unique natural setting with a departure from contemporary rhythm and pace; many of these newcomers were drawn to the absence of industry. While the railroad had aided the import of goods such as oysters, coffee, and pineapple from all over the globe, most of what entered the community in the post mining, pre-park establishment era – building materials, food and drums of gasoline – arrived by air, vehicle, or a small hand-pulled cable car. Quick to make use of the materials that the Kennecott Company left behind, these residents devised new uses for the bins that had once transported copper ore from the mine shafts to the crushing mill. In one case, the bins created a novel passage over the Kennecott River following the quick collapse of the railroad bridge, which the Kennecott Company had never built to last. According to Sax (1980), the transformation of the copper bins to a community tram system:

> *symbolized a degree of self-imposed burden that encouraged people to learn to take care of themselves and to develop their own resources. They were neither hermits or ascetics, but people who wanted to stand aside from the careless ease of pushing a button. One had to develop repair skills or rely on neighbors. And the culture of the tram meant that everyone had to consider pound by pound the cost of hauling the demands of his/her lifestyle.*

The above description contrasts sharply with the experience of most community members in the Kennecott area today. The copper bins and many other remnants of Kennecott now belong to the park service and they have been transformed into tourist commodities. They claim there is less inclination for people to make use of what they have, less use of the materials that were already on the landscape, and more importation from the outside world. While twenty years ago, people communicated with CB's over a community radio station, today the phones that were implemented in the mid 1990's have largely been replaced once again by wireless Internet and cell phone reception. People are increasingly plugged in in a community that gained its romantic reputation and draw for being off the grid. One no longer needs to lug a season's supply of lentils, trail mix and other non-perishable products from Anchorage or the lower 48. The recent construction of a modern convenience store in the center of town offers imported goods like California grown avocados and cherries for "Anchorage" prices. Similar to the height of the mining era in Kennecott, once again there is an economy that supports the sale of $4 power bars, organic cereal, and expensive dried mangoes in the town mercantile. As one old timer put it, "In the old days we would discuss fixing a wheel on the carts [to transport goods across] the Kennecott River, now we are replacing the carts with no conversation about it."

Many locals of Euro-American descent that I spoke to agree that the past interdependence of community members is at risk of being lost to a new form of

individualism. Rather than hauling one's construction materials across a raging creek on foot with the help of neighbors or by community constructed foot bridges that were in constant repair by groups of community members working together, a sturdy private vehicle bridge now sells seasonal vehicle passes for upwards of $500. Loaded in individually owned vehicles, imported bundles of wood from Home Depot regularly cross this bridge to bring construction materials straight to the front door of a cabin. Deliveries of gasoline, imported groceries and other supplies flow into the community on a daily basis.

Many members of the community concurred that the park is becoming increasingly "gated and hand railed." Although the NPS expansion has also filtered more jobs and outside money into the area, one local resident asserted that Kennecott, the central basis for the NPS mining narrative, is quickly becoming "any park town USA." Some have also expressed a degree of wistfulness for the pre-park atmosphere, and they would like that atmosphere captured in NPS histories. In her early twenties, a woman went to work on the Alaska pipeline, much of which runs along the boundary of the Park. Though she often worked ten to twelve hour days, seven days a week, she had boundless energy to explore the Copper River Basin, much of which is now Park. "I liked it so much I accepted a layoff in '76 and rented a little cabin, not far from the pump station south of Tonsina. I often refer to it as the best year of my life." She recalls that there were so few people in the Park in those days that "you were always glad to run into someone in that big landscape. Running into someone was more of a treat than a problem. Now you go for peace and quiet."

Following the NPS acquisition of Kennecott in 1998, Non-Native locals recalled that it remained a ghost town for many years. " The park had not done any improvements," she laments. "[there was] mostly original paint, original condition and nothing visually prominent like there is now. Going there for the [2011] centennial makes me so thankful I was there at the end of 90s before it blossomed into the different place it is now. Let me retract the word blossoming. What does a tumor do?"

Today many of these residents suggest that the NPS staff are akin to the managers of the company town. And the town has turned to Disney World. They say the agency operates from a distance, most often from Washington DC, where those making management decisions about the Kennicott mining narrative have never set foot in Alaska, let alone Wrangell-St. Elias Park. They claim most NPS employees leave Kennecott on weekends and return to their more permanent homes in communities outside of the Park. Millions of dollars have been poured into the ongoing restoration of Kennecott, which has been in process since the early 2000s. Much of that money has stemmed from regional and national NPS offices as well as from private donors.

Park residents claim that the NPS investment in Kennecott has created uneven access to the company town, or in today's terms, to the benefits that could result for local residents from park establishment. The very act of 'selling' these towns

as a travel attraction commodifies the inhabited place of residents, thereby diminishing the community's cultural history and social dynamics in favor of a highly stylized vignette of America's past (Ringer 1996). Kennecott is just one community among the twenty-three resident zone communities in the park and other park communities, such as Nabesna and Slana, which are also connected to the road system, that might have benefitted from further NPS attention and investment[43].

At the same time, many locals are employed by NPS or private contractors, earning high wages of up to $65 an hour that allow them to remain in the area – long after the summer season. Some take enormous pride in the skilled work involved in restoring buildings constructed with the same redwood trees that built San Francisco, in structures that are over 100-years-old. For them the restoration of Kennicott has allowed them to learn sophisticated carpentry skills. This is the opposite of what went on prior to park establishment when these opportunities did not exist and many local residents left the community in the summer to cash in on lucrative Alaska summer season industries such as guiding, fishing, and hunting.

One established non-Native hunting guide from the less traveled Nabesna area spoke to me about the NPS prioritization of Kennecott:

> *Yeah McCarthy Kennecott that whole section over there is what they wanted to focus on and that's why they built the ranger station on that side and stuff like that. They had a bunch of drawings they brought out here to show us for this side and they were going to build a road up to the glacier and they were going to build a big park ranger station up there and everything like that and we were kind of against that it was like you know really you really need to do that*?[44]

Uneven Access to The Company Town: Ahtna Narratives

Yet, there is a deeper layer of narratives related to mining that NPS could address to remedy the injustices of the past and particularly address the area's history of colonial displacement. Certain Ahtna narratives offer an important expansion and counterpoint to the above narratives from white landowners. They also offer a different perspective on changes in the land and those caused by NPS, increased tourism, and second homes. Contrary to popular narratives offered by NPS and tourist businesses, prospectors from the lower 48 did not discover copper ore in the Wrangells and they did not learn the ways of the land on their own (Allen, 1885)[45]. Ahtna people with the longest history in the area, and more recent arrivals who are predominantly Euro-American with a short, but intense history of living in connection to the land, often express different histories about the

[43] In recent years, the Nabesna area has received some improvements, including the establishment of a new campground on Ahtna land. Nevertheless, this has required a very small portion of the funding that has been allocated to Kennecott.
[44] Interview conducted by Margot Higgins at the resident's home in Nabesna on July 12, 2012.
[45] Statements of a similar meaning were made in a series of interviews with Native and Non-Native Alaskans, in addition to an early journal entry by Henry T. Allen a lieutenant in the U.S. Army in 1885.

area. Some residents of Kennicott, for example, deny that there was ever much Ahtna presence in the area, due to the lack of salmon and big game in that particular area of the Park. Nevertheless, Ahnta people claim a prominent history in the area, as migratory people and as a culture that relied on copper for its decorative properties. They claim that the richest copper vein in the world was stolen from their chief, challenging the NPS narrative that the copper was spotted on a mountain slope by an Alaska "explorer" after it was initially mistaken for a large patch of grass.

The mining and post mining era allowed for a strong force of resilience among many of the Native Alaska communities in the Wrangell-St. Elias region, who had previously been displaced by colonial influence, physical exile and cultural indoctrination via forced boarding schools, missionaries and disease. Many Native Alaskans had provided local provisions to the miners through hunting and gathering and they shared techniques about how to adapt to a harsh windy environment where temperatures range from the eighties in the summer to negative forty in the winter. Others were instrumental in the construction of the railroad and filled many jobs that entailed operating heavy machinery. As a result, some Native Alaskan families were able to rebound financially and culturally in the era following the mining period, which ended just before World War II. A number of Native Alaskans entered the sport hunt guiding business that became increasingly popular in remote areas of Alaska in the 40s and 50s. Local tribal councils remained influential over land rights issues, family relations and crime.

In 1945, Alaska passed some of the country's first civil rights legislation guaranteeing citizens they would not be discriminated against. Ten years before Brown VS. the Board of Education, the Alaska Civil Rights Act outlawed racial segregation and Alaska Natives won equal rights. The 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) represented another possible turning point for Native American rights in Alaska that coincided with the Civil Rights Movement. It was unprecedented in the United States for an indigenous population to potentially have so much control over the future of their land. The Act divided over 40 million acres of land into 12 geographic regions that would be governed by tribal corporations, unlike the reservation system in the lower 48.

Yet in section 4, aboriginal title was dissolved and diverse tribal lineages were reduced and forced into federally recognized categories that did not acknowledge their connections to the land of their ancestors– or their experience of colonial history and cultural trauma. Hundreds of individual clans were compressed into state defined categories. Identity became increasingly measured by blood and corporate accounting (Smith 2014). The process for Native tribes to become federally recognized by ANCSA was pushed through in less than two years.

An interpretation of the hurried, complicated and disempowering experience of many Native Alaskans is expressed in a series of interpretive letters to the editor

that were published in the Native newspaper, the *Tundra Times* by, Fred BigJim and James Ito Adler (1974).

> *I have been living here in the village for many years . . . we didn't have much to do in the evenings until one day when the mail plane dropped a bundle of magazines, which all turned out to be the same—an ACT*[46]*. Wally read one copy and told me that it had a lot to do with my future here in Alaska, so we read it together in the evening to practice our [English] lessons. So far it has been pretty one sided because an ACT doesn't have any Eskimo language in it. . . . As there were many new and difficult words in an ACT we read section 3 first on definitions. The very first word defined in an act is "secretary," which does not mean a woman who operates a typewriter and makes decisions for the boss in an office, as I had always been told. This "Secretary" is the Boss of the interior department. I wonder who writes his letters for him and makes all of his decisions for him like all the other bosses? Anyway, this secretary seems to be extremely important since he is the first person defined in an ACT and apparently gets to make most of the important decisions. For example, in section 3 of an ACT, it says that a Native is a person that has ¼ native blood, or if not that, then someone who is recognized by other Natives as a Native. Then it says in section 3, any decision of the secretary regarding eligibility for enrolment shall be final. So Wally was wondering if he was a friend of the secretary could he be enrolled as a Native? As for me, I was wondering if the Secretary doesn't like me, could he prevent me from being enrolled as a Native? I mean is a Native a Native or is a Native someone the Secretary says is a Native? How much Native blood does the Secretary need to be able to decide who is Native? And who were the Natives who decided that the Secretary could decide who Natives were?*

Prior to the late 1800s Alaska Native tribes used those areas traditionally controlled by them. Land was generally held by the community as a whole. These boundaries of control were not based on written documents or maps, but on traditions and practice. This communal ownership is now described technically by NPS as "traditional use and occupancy." The political challenge with this type of ownership is that there was no receipt or written title. These narratives were transferred through oral histories. This was the dilemma that Alaska Natives faced, when, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the State, corporate interests, conservationists and sectors of the federal government began encroaching on what was identified by Alaska Natives to be their traditional lands.

A compromise was reached over Alaska Native land claims on the 18th of December, 1971. Native claims in Alaska were unprecedented, yet the access most Native Alaskans received was insufficient for the continuation of traditional lifestyles and in most cases was further reduced through Park establishment.

[46] Reference to ANCSA

Today, while a half an acre of land in the Park near Kennecott sells for over a quarter million dollars, a few of the 23-resident zone communities in the Park are among the poorest in the nation. Similar to the conditions before ANCSA, the Alaska Native population in this park has the highest rates of alcoholism, infant mortality, unemployment and lowest cash income and literacy rates in the United States. Scholars have linked such conditions with the expropriation of lands and overturning of traditional communal ownership of land (Daugherty 2002, Garcia 2010).

Narrative Entanglement

Ten years after the park was established, the horse packing outfit of one Ahtna family went out of business. As a family friend described, they could not keep up with the ongoing paperwork or competition from non-Native guides. In addition, following the establishment of the Park, the family was no longer able to graze their horses in the area where they had grazed freely in the past. In an interview one former park employee explained that during the push for park establishment:

> *Native Alaskans liked the subsistence idea. But they also thought the park would generate Native Alaskan jobs and that there would be wage labor for Natives in the Wrangells. That has never been realized.* [47]

One Ahtna man lamented the fact that the Ahnta community was not provided more opportunity to develop tourism in the Nabesna area. "NPS has failed to invest in small micro-businesses that would really benefit Ahtnas," he argues. While this man contends that NPS made a big deal about the Nabesna mines being designated as a Superfund Site, he notes that cleaning up the area would have been far less expensive than the resources NPS has poured into Kennecott. Yet he recalls that back in the 1970s he had a strong sense that park establishment was going to cause uneven benefits. "Those who already had gold received more gold in their pockets," he claims. [48]

The Park's current approach (as exemplified in the case of the rail centennial celebration) reinforces a local and national frontier narrative through the boom and bust mining story, and the symbolic meanings that are attached to that simplified story: Mining represented an enormous transition for Alaska Native communities in the Park and though the implications were mixed, in some cases the industry created opportunities for resilience.

These historical narratives remain powerful and influential today among NPS staff and local community members. Memories of the experience of early NPS employees were evoked during an NPS panel in the summer of 2012 when a number of former NPS rangers described the inhospitable atmosphere of the Park. Current and former NPS officials recalled not being allowed to purchase gas

[47] Telephone interview conducted by Margot Higgins on October 4, 2014.
[48] Telephone interview conducted by Margot Higgins on February 13, 2013.

or food or find places to live in communities in and around the park. As addressed earlier in this chapter, today, many of the locals that were initially uncongenial and unreceptive to NPS now work closely with the agency. Some local residents, primarily non-Native people, have concluded that it is better to work for NPS than against the agency. On the whole, NPS officials are less timid and many of them live in the park year round with the encouragement of the agency to participate in subsistence activity.

Though they mostly supported park establishment and tourism at that time, today many Ahtna people have little sympathy for these battle stories that NPS officials and locals use to describe the early days of the park. According to the Ahtna man I spoke to, the fierceness of the pre-ANILCA debate for Native Alaskans was never captured by the media and rarely showed up in meeting reports and research materials. He has limited sympathy for the plight of the early NPS staff as he feels that the hostility he encountered around ANCSA in 1972, was far greater than that experienced by the Park employees following ANILCA. "They do not wear the same scares and bullet holes that I do," he said.[49]

He points critically to park managers who take "a one-dimensional snapshot of a four dimensional" reality. "The one dimensional snapshot only justifies the stance of those in power." He also contends that NPS and certain park residents have an ongoing tendency to "take history and use history in terms of forming goals or mission. If the history doesn't fit their mission they disregard it. "[50] While he does not cast individual blame, he contrasts the static reductive tendency of park managers with Ahtna understandings. According the Ahtna people, all things are relational and humans and nature are not separate. They do not perceive any distinct separation between people, the animals, the soil, and water -- or the histories we tell of them. This informant proposes that these false distinctions have been solidified through the English language, which he refers to as "a language of property." Such distinctions may have been further fortified through NPS management policy.

Employment during the mining era had allowed many Ahtna families to re-settle the land that had been part of their cultural tradition for thousands of years and adapt to new social and ecological circumstances. Referred to by an Ahtna informant as "outlaws," in the 1950s another wave of Americans from the lower 48 arrived primarily to engage in small mining operations and to run hunting guide businesses. In that time period several Ahtna families were slowly displaced from the guiding business and this pattern continued with Park establishment. One Ahtna informant contends that "non-Native outlaw families" stole their land from his family during the 1950s. These "outlaw" narratives gained the most traction with NPS and the pro-park environmental community during Alaska national park establishment:

[49] *ibid*
[50] *ibid*

> *When NPS was established in 1980, we had a whole series of park superintendents. First there were the rangers and supers, a few deployed came in and they ended up doing the victimization thing. They considered themselves victims and in the process of considering themselves victims, those who set out to use park for own benefit became their friends. . . the remnants of outlaw society –those people subverted NPS to protect their interests… Understand that from where I was coming from these people were outlaws, where you are coming from they are heroes because they did not [violently] oppose NPS.*[51]

Ahtna narratives challenge both the NPS and non-Native Park resident narratives. The creation of the park, which followed ANCSA, has not benefitted the Ahtna at nearly the same scale as many Euro-American families who have been able to take better advantage of tourism, real estate development and speculation. The restoration of Kennicott has had almost no impact. While the politics of Park establishment rested on the narratives of the lower-48 environmental movement – that they would protect the traditional lifestyles of Native Alaskans – Ahtna communities were not afforded the same opportunity to take advantage of tourism. "We wanted to start a trekking company, but we could not afford the insurance," an Ahtna told me. An Ahtna informant explained that all the places his mother once used to fish are now privatized. "My mom quit fishing because she has no drivers license. It costs hundreds dollars to buy a fish rack and haul fish." [52]

While the Ahtna Nabesna narrative takes place in the past, they continue to resonate with contemporary debates about colonial encounters, park history, climate change, and local knowledge. Though there is an Ahtna heritage center at Park headquarters in Copper Center, narratives surrounding Native Alaskan displacement have faded in Wrangell-St. Elias, due to the increased prominence of current narratives by non-Native Alaskans and state policy. The prioritization of tourism and the rehabilitation of the Kennecott company mining town echo the national NPS narrative that ranks the experience of guests over the area's more comprehensive dynamic living history. While many non-Native Alaskans continue to speak vociferously about being displaced by the Park, many of them have in fact benefitted from the park establishment, and the ongoing erasure of Native Alaskan narratives. This perpetuates a form of symbolic violence, as Braun has stated, where significant histories remain buried. This Ahtna narrative poignantly maintains that colonialism is not something relegated to the distant past in Alaska. Thus, the contemporary narrative that the NPS promotes and depends upon buries the role of Native Alaskan narratives in contributing to the production of the cultural history of Alaska.

[51] Telephone interview conducted by Margot Higgins on March 12, 2014
[52] Telephone interview conducted by Margot Higgins on May 17, 2014.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented a case where local residents have had far less impact over the living wilderness model, as experienced by the inability for local narratives to be included in the national narrative that the NPS tells of Wrangell-St. Elias. In most of the United States, NPS has worked to create timeless places where the recent human past is very often obscured from the visiting public. At a national scale, NPS might view the removal of historic fences, tree stumps, ski resorts, and roads as acts of beautification just as they accept efforts to control elk, nonnative fish, and other species in national parks as necessary in maintaining the pristine nature of such places. In Wrangell-St. Elias, NPS has frozen most history with the exception of a brief moment of unmitigated industrial development. The Kennecott mining history has become the baseline narrative around which other park narratives revolve.

The world views and experiences of local park residents influence their patterns of resource use, their relationship to the non human environment, and contribute to their distinct identities, whether they are relative new comers or their families have been part of the land for thousands of years. How we see the history of a place and people's relation to that place changes who partakes in the management of that place, how management is understood by the public, and the goals embedded in that management. Accommodating a more inclusive narrative of our largest national park would require abandoning the search for a simple unitary model, particularly the idea of a baseline historical moment such as Kennecott around which all other histories revolve

Concentrating tourism in Kennecott might be a wise strategy for a federal agency that is tasked with managing and preserving the biggest national park in the United States. Nevertheless, this chapter has examined why a living history as a well as an extended history of industrial conquest cannot be easily transferred into an enterprise of historic and ecological preservation. The NPS focus on mining extends well beyond the railroad celebration. Kennecott has become a postage stamp for the Park, attracting visitors from all over the world. Images of Kennecott often now parallel those of Denali, glaciers, salmon, and grizzly bears in the Anchorage Airport. Although the majority of tourists to this 13.2 million acre Park and Preserve visit Kennecott based on the advice offered on the NPS website and tourist brochures, the former mining town is just one of the twenty-three diverse resident zone communities in this vast national park. Yet by popularizing Kennecott as a place of free enterprise and industrial development, NPS plays a role in suppressing the vast array of human experience and relationship to the land in the park at large, historically and in the present. NPS also indirectly legitimizes some cultural practices such as tourism over others such as subsistence.

Erasing evidence of a human present within parks renders attempts to understand these wildernesses as part and parcel of the human experience nearly impossible, while further widening the gulf between how we define wilderness

and the place of humans within it. Unless and until the NPS becomes far less selective in what historical elements they allow to remain within national parks, the agency's management will remain hamstrung. How NPS frames the historic narrative of Wrangell St-Elias matters not only for Park residents, but also for popular understanding of Alaska. The current NPS narratives often fit within oversimplified narratives of Alaska. This is especially relevant as a robust popular literature and growing series of reality television further essentializes and romanticizes Alaska as a landscape with exaggerated folk tales about miners, outlaws and outsiders. Yet these simplified stories contribute little to our understanding of the dynamic human experience in this place, out of specific narratives between Native and Non-Native, humans and the non-human environment, and how these relationships change based on extended time in this place.

Greater attentiveness to non-mining narratives would allow NPS to better meet the mission of protecting cultural and ecological resources.

Also deeply missing from the predominant mining narrative in Wrangell-St. Elias Park and Preserve is any perspective on what it is like to have had your culture and history erased, re-established, re-imagined as a static representation, and then re-consumed as entertainment, economic opportunity, or part of another culture's celebration (Hayes, 2012). Sometimes as in the case of the railroad centennial, a popular narrative falls apart and demands that we recognize where it falls short, where we have omitted the full story, and simplified the plot. Narrative simplification has occurred beyond the conceptualization and framing of human history in Wrangell-St. Elias Park and Preserve. The transformation of this vast area into a national park and, in turn, into a tourist commodity has not only contributed to revised narratives about the area's human history, but it has reinforced a colonial history, rather than acknowledging the opportunities for resisting that history. As national parks scholar Alice Kelly (2013) argues, once a place "has been attached with new value and economic meaning, it may be only a matter of time before the new fictitious commodity becomes normalized in the imagination.

Figure 10. Aerial view of the Kennicott Valley, courtesy Andrew Mackie

Chapter Three: Cascading Ice and Muddy Waters: Narrative Confluences and Contestations

You know in this neck of Alaska when the ice is rotten, and the road is mud, and the woodpile is low, and in spite of falling on ones butt on the ice today, I survived the winter. Winterkill is for real and when one lives close to the earth it's nothing to be unwary of.

–Year round resident of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

This place is high energy. It feeds off the glacier that literally spills into this community. Many people like myself are drawn to that. Some go crazy.

– Part time resident of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

In the award winning documentary film "Chasing Ice (2012)," *National Geographic* photographer James Balog and his team deployed revolutionary high-tech time-lapse cameras across sub-zero conditions in the Arctic to capture a multi-year record of the world's changing glaciers. Balog's riveting photography, which depicts an alarming narrative about the rapid loss of the world's glaciers due to climate change, also conveys a familiar narrative that is contained within the larger dominant narrative about the perils of climate change: glaciers and the arctic environment at large, have become particularly

fragile and unstable due to warming temperatures. This narrative takes place in a landscape devoid of humans, one that has come to shape popular perceptions of Alaska, and that fueled the protection of Alaska wilderness. It is not surprising then that this film has received widespread recognition from environmental organizations and that it has circulated widely among policy makers, including a screening at the White House on Earth Day 2013. Such a depiction has great power in shaping a popular national understanding of the impacts of climate change. Aided by helicopters, expensive technology and a band of young male extreme adventurers who had never previously visited the locations captured, the film overlooks that people living in proximity to glaciers have long been a witness to such dramatic changes in the land and have experienced ongoing displacement as well as opportunities, through non-human and human agents that are intentional and unintentional. Left out too is the role of ice as an agent that produces social impact and generates human response.

In this chapter, I leverage the role of ice and flooding events as prompts for local and national narratives, and as narrative actors themselves. Narratives about the dynamic and unpredictable behavior of glacier and water events can be a lens through which we examine the disconnect between what locals and the NPS think about these events and particular management responses to these events, expanding the existing analysis of these interactions. Within these narratives it becomes apparent that there are also many non-human agents at work in this landscape—namely ice and water, but also earthquakes, landslides and volcanoes, among other agents. I treat glacier and flooding activity as focal points of environmental change around which narratives converge and conflict in the Park and Preserve.

I argue that especially in an "inhabited wilderness," these non-human narratives have an elevated role in influencing management decisions. The human narratives I address here are ecologically contingent—some responses to the actions of non-human agents, some predictive of landscape change, some reactive to other humans' determinations of how nature should be managed or controlled. While narratives reflect local conceptions of wilderness they also drive these imaginings.

I have the following goals: 1) to elevate ice and water as narrators, 2) to in turn, present a range of narratives about glacier and flooding activity between different human communities in the Park 2) to show why these narratives about ice and water events have changed over time and 3) to analyze local and national water and ice narratives for the ways in which they support or dismantle human nature separations and complicate Park management.

Melting ice and water create narratives about stability and instability. Through four examples, I will demonstrate how these non-human narratives shape how the individuals, organizations and state agents trying to mitigate the impacts of these events, or that allow them to proceed. Local and national narratives in response to non-human narratives reveal both how people perceive they have

been displaced by the following agents of nature: melting glaciers, storms and altering river courses.

Next, I examine how local narratives interact with NPS narratives about ice and water as natural resources with dynamic power of their own, that generate conflicting interpretations and responses. We might think of the interaction of these narratives as an additional influence that augments and addresses the limits of advanced technology and modeling that are often used to view these changes and that illuminates the historical, socio political dynamics within this area.

Theoretical Framing

Scholars have criticized thinking and governance that splits the world into binaries that are placed in oppositional relationships (Haraway 1992, Scott 1998, Latour 2001, Weir, 2009). While there is analytical value in describing the connections between humans and other organisms, or the abiotic forces through which they share the world, political ecologists are also particularly concerned with variation and difference. Humans interact with the non-human world in different ways in relation to class, gender and race, among other factors. Narratives about changing ecological conditions influence politics through the divergent meanings attached to such changes by individuals and interest groups with different levels of power (Moore 2005). Local and national narratives about glacier and flooding activity among various park residents and managers can reveal more nuanced social, historical, political, and economic factors that affect Park management, but have so far been more elusive to park managers. Scholars in these areas cite the importance of recognizing the connections between human and non-human influences and intentions that shape history. Cronon (1992), Cruikshank, (2005) and Carey (2010) have focused on narratives as important for understanding our relationship to the non-human world, morality, and layers of human power. For example, Cruikshank refers to glaciers as "actors," in the introduction to *Do Glaciers Listen?*

Numerous scholars and popular writers from a variety of disciplines have examined the ways that narratives in ecology have reinforced those human and nature binaries (Botkin 1990, Hecht and Cockburn 1989, Fairhead and Leach 1996, Marris 2015). This has contributed to revised narratives of socio-ecological interactions that question the assumptions that are embedded within certain scientific analyses (Cote and Nightingale 2012). The repercussions of the separation of ecological and human impacts are what Bruno Latour calls the "Great Divide" distinguishing nature as separate from culture (cited by Cruikshank 2005, p11). Latour (1990) writes, "our intellectual life is out of kilter." The sharp lines we have constructed between object and subject, mind and body, human and non-human are fuzzier than we think. Re-examining the distinctions between the sciences and the humanities that have evolved over the past several hundred years, Latour elevates the role of the non-human in entering the discourse for how to address changes in the land that have catastrophic

consequences for humans-such as global warming or in the case of Wrangell Saint Elias Park, changing water courses and flooding events. Similarly, Carolyn Merchant (2013) also argues that we need to shift our frame of reference for examining nature, departing from our past narratives of declension and ascension and embracing "autonomous nature" – a nature that is unpredictable and uncontrollable, but also inextricably intertwined with human activity. We need to acknowledge these narratives for their partiality and include a more complex understanding of the role of non-human actors as well as the "possibility of non-linear plots"(Latour, p. 208).

Other theorists, particularly from human geography, push scholars to rethink the non-human as similar and different from humans, taking seriously their capacities as well as their "beingness" (Philo & Wilbert 2000, p.25). As Walker notes, answering why "interspecific conflicts" take the forms they do may require a re-conception of the non-human as "living and breathing with agency, experiences, and, stories" bringing together "our shared natural histories" (2009, p. 10).

Focusing on "the complex entanglings of human-non-human relations with space, place, location, environment and landscape" (Philo & Wilbert 2000 p.4), the work of critical geographers and political ecologists complicates traditional understandings of non-human entities. However, discussions within critical scholars can be disconnected from debates around conservation and on-the-ground management. As Robbins notes, we have to go beyond "idle denouncing" (2002, p.1511) if we are to take seriously real questions of non-human and human conflict, and this requires a shift from idealist approaches to more materially-grounded approaches. Thus, narratives about ice and water offer such a tactic.

Narratives about ice and water are also important in understanding how people might respond to recently protected areas and situations determined by non-human actors. Embedded within narratives surrounding "natural" events triggered by ice and water are entangled and often conflicting beliefs about our relationship to nature, science, technology, power and one another. How actors make sense of the world informs how they act. Narratives are formed through social processes and human interaction with the non-human world, not merely as a direct response to environmental change (Sayre 2004).

Political ecologists are criticized by natural scientists for not paying adequate attention to ecology and paying too much attention to the social (Goldman et al. 2011, Pooley 2013). Ecologists and economists might argue that a certain degree of simplification may be necessary for land management. As Turner (2013) points out this reflects only partial recognition of the diversity of political ecology approaches that could be used to better understand the interaction of "nature and culture."

I respond to these debates by paying increased attention to the differences among local narratives and by looking at how these become intertwined with, conversant

with, and opposed to national narratives. I also reveal the dynamics of power at different scales that influence the distance these narratives carry and the weight they are given in policy and management decision-making processes. By examining the complex interactions between glacier melt and culture in Wrangell Saint-Elias, I challenge western scientific analyses that have typically separated the interaction of nature and culture, and management plans that envision a false sense of ecological and social stability.

Ice and water-centered narratives reveal different perceptions of the history in the area and how these perceptions have been altered by "inhabited wilderness." For example, Ahtna people with the longest history in the area, and more recent arrivals who are predominantly Euro-American with a short, but intense history of living in connection to the land, often express different narratives about ice and water events.

Ice and Water Narratives

There is a characteristic of river flow in Wrangell-St. Elias that throws many people – especially those from the lower-48– into confusion. Instead of declining as the summer progresses, rivers grow due to the increase of melting ice and snow. This was one of the unforeseen factors that likely contributed to the death of 22-year-old Chris McCandless, as famously reconstructed by Jon Krakaur (1996).

A central theme in this chapter is that ice and water events in Wrangell St. Elias are uncertain and unexpected. They involve ice decline and surging events, violent floods that wash out human habitation, landslides and localized weather events. They limit and enhance human activity, causing roads to open and close, create temporary ice bridges to cross, or places to pack rafts, and even serve as a lure for community observation and gathering, especially during the yearly Hidden Lake ice dam collapse, which sends enormous ice bergs down the Kennicott River and raises the water level of the River by several feet.

"The place *cycles* differently," William Cronon (1990) wrote following his visit to Wrangell Saint-Elias just after the national park was established. Exceeding the size of Switzerland, the Park and Preserve is a vast 13.2 million acre area that uniquely experiences extreme fluctuations in daylight, precipitation and temperature throughout the year. Twenty five percent of the area is covered in ice. These vast glaciers seem to swallow mountains. The Park and Preserve's water resources are diverse and extensive, including glaciers, snow fields, wetlands, marine coast, thermal springs, lakes, and large river and stream systems (NPS 2003). Three major mountain ranges -- the Wrangell-St. Elias, Chugach and Nutzotin mountains with ten of the highest peaks on the continent -- heavily influence water flow patterns in the Park with water and ice as the major vehicles for distributing sediment, organic matter, and nutrients, and this activity subsequently determines ecological processes in lakes, rivers, and marine environments (NPS 2003).

Each glacier in the Park is distinct from the others in terms of PH, salinity and mineral content. They generate their own riverine systems, either on their surface or like an intricate plumbing system within and below the ice, cutting and carrying mountains with them, sculpting and polishing the land, crushing rock to dust until it becomes soil where plants might take root.[53] Seasonal melt predominantly from glaciers and large ice fields forms the headwaters that influence the annual runoff pattern, delaying large river surges until the late summer when glacial-melt waters are at their peak flow (NPS 2003). These glacial streams generally have higher gradient, higher sediment load, higher turbidity and greater scouring capacity than non-glacial streams. The major drainages in the Park and Preserve carry some of the highest suspended sediment loads measured in the state of Alaska (National Park Service, 1990). For example, the Copper River, which deposits 75 million tons of sediment annually into its delta and the Gulf of Alaska, has built up a layer of silt 600 feet deep. During summer months, the daily sediment transport can be 750,000 cubic feet, one of the largest river sediment loads known on the planet. Such heavy sediment loads often cause waterways to braid out as a particular channel begins to fill with sediment, forcing the water to switch directions to form a new channel, and creating wide channels and floodplains. These factors comprise a highly fluctuating fluvial system where flooding from glacier-dammed lake outbursts and significant changes in stream and river geometry are common.

[53] Personal notes from a field trip with Barry Hecht on July 11, 2011.

Figure 11. The Kuskalana Glacier, 2005

The processes accompanying water and ice formation during freeze-up and break-up have a wide range of effects on the bed, banks, and organisms that inhabit and depend on lakes and rivers. Snow that survives a year or more gradually increases flake by flake, inch by inch, becoming more dense until it is no longer permeable to air, at which point it becomes part of the glacier. Similar to metamorphic rock, glacier ice consists of interlocking crystals of ice, owing its physical characteristics to the compaction and deformation that occurs under the weight of overlying snow and ice. During the peak period of melting in early summer, the water flow that emerges at the terminus of a glacier often creates an enormous turbulent gushing event, frequently flooding the valley floor below. Ice dams too, let loose, sending icebergs dozens of miles down rivers. Yet in winter, discharge is reduced almost entirely to a tiny trickle or it forms solid ice. These extremes between summer and winter provide a wide range of melt water features on and around glaciers. The mass of a glacier is constantly changing as the weather varies from season to season and, on longer time scales, as local and global climates change.

Glaciers and floods act as geological, biological and cultural zones of convergence. Linking together the experiences of human and non-human forces, a glacier is not just a static hunk of ice. They are fluid and constantly in motion. Like lava, they slide through time, tumbling down mountains and creating new mountains peak by peak, valley by valley, carving another world where organic life can establish itself. Yet while glaciers may appear to be static to a tourist, local residents of the Park might associate glaciers with more lively activity. How you view the glacier, depends on your experience and interaction with it. As nature writer Rick Bass (2002, p.103) writes, "it is only when we try to compress the life of a glacier into the scale of our own short lives that the life leaves them."

Non-human processes in the Park are often quite theatrical and frequently lend themselves to dramatic interpretation. The speed, severity, and complexity of ice and water events such as flooding, and the narratives that accompany floods, continually challenge the ability of society at national and local levels to generate appropriate responses to these events. Prior to the discourse on climate change, people have been adapting to and telling stories about ice and water events for thousands of years and human adaptations have continued even after the area was established as a national park (Cruikshank 2005). Water from snow and melting glaciers has provided travel, trade, fishing, milling, mining, power generation, fire protection, irrigation, as well as drinking water. Melting ice and water also stimulate ecological processes, contributing to ecological succession, providing migratory passages for salmon and supporting essential wildlife habitat, especially the flooding of extensive wetlands in the Park. At the same time, water has also acted as a barrier to the construction of stable infrastructure in this region—roads and bridges are frequently washed out, cutting off travel and access for days. Avalanches and floods tear through homes, destroying human property and relocating human communities.

Due to their powerful presence and vital importance to local people, these glacial processes also produce different identities amongst the people living and working in this area. They have generated local narratives about the resilience and adaptability of people who live in remote settings. Locals often view their work and identities as inseparable from the physical space they inhabit—the rugged landscape is woven into everyday life in this part of Alaska. Water and ice in particular afford more than ecological services—they provide entertainment and help foster social connections. For example, each year when the Hidden Lake Ice Dam collapses, sending giant boulders and icebergs down the Kennicott River through the town of McCarthy, local residents turn out en masse at the local foot bridge to marvel at the 36-hour event. This same flooding often displaces bridges and has caused people to be isolated for days on end in a particular area, and in some cases it has prompted the creation of new social connections.

Humans also have a history of shaping water and ice activity in the area. Historical and contemporary mining activities have influenced streams and associated riparian areas by changing stream morphology and increasing

sedimentation (Bleakley, 2002). There are more than 400 abandoned mine sites in the Park, for example (NPS 2003). When bridges blow out in a flooding event they are either abandoned or repaired. Foot bridges have been replaced with sturdier vehicle bridges. Giant culverts have been installed by the Alaska Department of Transportation with hopes of saving a road that is particularly prone to flooding. Buildings are protected with sand bags and manmade stream diversions are put in place with hopes that the water might be diverted elsewhere.

There are various human entry points into the Park, which influence how people conceive of ice, water and their interaction with human experience. Ice and water events have been a locus of conflicting narratives between NPS and Park inholders as they both struggle to define what processes are "natural" and which are "anthropogenic." The following section examines national NPS narratives and the counter narratives that arise from the community about flooding events in the Park. By examining the relationship of these narratives we are able to better understand how and in what ways narratives can influence policy and management and affect local power and understandings of federal management actions.

Figure 12. Community drinking water sign

Conflicting Human and Non-Human Narratives in Wrangell Saint Elias National Park and Preserve

Just before entering the community of McCarthy, a hand painted sign greets you at Clear Creek with the following message: *Environmentally sensitive area. Community drinking water. Please no bathing or washing. Keep dogs on a leash.* Clear water is a rare resource in a region where much of the fresh water is clouded by glacial silt. The town of McCarthy was established at its present

location in the early 1900s, in large part due to the plentiful year round water supply offered by this Creek (Hecht and Lachapelle, 1999). The sign's request left an indelible impression on me when I first visited Wrangell Saint Elias Park and Preserve in 2004. Such a simple sign that stemmed straight from the community seemed to serve the function of protecting water outside of government regulation and enforcement. I met several local residents who attested to the success of this system and who drank directly from this creek and other water sources throughout the community.

It turns out that Giardia was reported in the area as early as 1997 and there were also reports of drinking water contamination during the mining era, which spanned 1900-1938. By 2012, many local residents were no longer drinking directly from this local water source or others, as several individuals had become sick with various water-borne infections. A number of people expressed concerns about the proliferation of dogs that has accompanied the growing number of part time residents and tourists in the Park. Although NPS is responsible for monitoring water and maintaining the quality of surface waters consistent with the Clean Water Act on NPS land, many Park residents are increasingly worried about changing water conditions and a lack of surface water in many areas of the Park. Some locals, in fact, point to the increased NPS presence and visitation to the area as the reason they can no longer rely on this untreated water source. And while NPS has invested heavily in tourism, locals have revealed frustration about the lack of a sewage treatment facility for the increased number of visitors that the area attracts. As one local family put it, there is little maintenance by Park employees for the four public outhouses that exist in Kennicott despite growing numbers of visitors. Community members often take matters into their own hands, cleaning up messy outhouses and replacing rolls of toilet paper when they run out.

Concerns over substandard sanitation coupled with increased visitation to the Kennicott McCarthy area have also been raised by professional hydrologists who have been conducting surveys in the area since the 1970s (Hecht and Lachapelle 1999). These conflicts over water are just one area where NPS and local residents in the community have had a tendency to talk past one another. Yet disagreements also occur in the context of a federal agency that is faced with the complicated task of managing a resource that runs through public and private land in an enormous, rugged 13.2 million acre Park and Preserve. And unlike the majority of national parks in the lower 48, where NPS is mainly responsible for responding to the concerns and needs of tourists, in Wrangell Saint Elias Park and Preserve, NPS must also contend not only with unpredictable non-human actors but also with inhabitants' multiple claims on park resources – a situation that the federal agency has historically been poorly-equipped to deal with.

Rifts between NPS and Park Inholders: Flooding Damage Accepted

Several residents in the Park shared stories of the agency's response to major flooding events that have affected their livelihoods. These discursive productions

have important implications for park management, as well as the livelihoods of park inholders. For example, the particularly flood prone locations of several inholders' properties and businesses have forced them to undergo several negotiation attempts with NPS (Bleakley 2002). Yet requests for relocation or mitigation due to flooding events are narratives themselves, signifying individual theories of access, rights, and what locals see as appropriate human responses to non-human events. These local narratives also demarcate an assertion of where power lies between local residents and the federal government and the boundaries between the two.

In the NPS's first Water Resources Scoping Report (2003), Don Weeks, a PhD hydrologist, concludes,

> *It is important for the National Park Service to differentiate between natural versus anthropogenic-impacted environments so that* mandated *management is appropriately implemented for WRST's water resources. Information that is gathered through inventory and monitoring of water resources in the park and preserve can be used to determine how the water resources influence the ecosystem and are affected by changes (anthropogenic, climatic and natural) (National Park Service, 1998). For example, a stream void of biological diversity may be the result of natural volcanic influences and not a human-induced impact; thus, the NPS would seek to maintain this natural condition.*

This report sums up the tendency of the National Park Service to oversimplify resource management narratives, revealing an adherence to a stark nature-society binary. It also reveals an assumption that there are patterns in the non-human system and that ecosystem development is orderly and reasonably predictable, embracing Clemensian[54] notions of ecosystem equilibrium that have been long revised not only by social scientists, but also by many ecologists. As interpreted locally, "natural condition" means different things to different people. In the case of NPS "natural condition" responds to national narratives about how nature should be preserved in national parks. While in Alaska, NPS has the authority through ANILCA to acquire by "purchase, donation, exchange or otherwise," lands within Park boundaries, many of the inholders I spoke to claimed that NPS ultimately plans to seize their land. This present narrative is very similar to the early narratives from Park inholders that I came across in my archival research. In one case, when the White River began shifting toward the southern end of its floodplain in the 1970s, a hunting guide tried to mitigate the effects of the river on his property by seeking federal approval. In 1978, he contacted the BLM to seek permission to divert an encroaching channel of the river from his land, but unbeknownst to him NPS had recently been placed in charge of the land, under the Antiquities Act invoked by President Carter. He received the following response from BLM:

[54] I discuss the influence of Clementsian views of ecology previously in my dissertation.

> *We are really sorry but we have been told that the moment the President invoked the Antiquities Act, the land was transferred to the National Park Service. Therefore we cannot even consider your request to receive authorization to modify the flow of some of the White River . . . We simply are not the federal agency that is responsible for this area now. However, we do hope everything works out well for you. (Vaden 1978).*

The administrative change ruffled the feathers of an individual who had been living for decades in a remote isolated part of Alaska. The river's property damaging activity continued throughout the early 80s. In 1984 the hunting guide requested permission from NPS to drive a bulldozer into the site and he was told that he needed permission from the Army Corps of Engineers. When this option was found to be cost prohibitive, the guide instead tried to divert the encroaching channel without permission and was subsequently cited by NPS (Budge 1984). Nevertheless, while NPS did agree to consider a land exchange, due to the impending floods, the appraisal was valued at less than $1,000 making such an exchange worthless to the hunting guide.

This narrative is just one of dozens of stories that inholders tell of the inability or refusal of the federal government to come up with the right solution at the right time. In several other cases where floodwaters threatened property, NPS responded by offering to allow a land exchange. Locals repeatedly spoke of the NPS insistence on imposing rules created in a distant place (Washington D.C.) in an area where those rules had little applicability. In this dominant local narrative, national park managers are bureaucratic paper pushers who have little idea about what is actually going on in a remote Alaskan Park. A female resident of the area prior to Park establishment told me in an interview, "NPS seems concerned that the national perspective of national park has to be taught. But they come with a mindset we are not happy about. [NPS] is constantly getting new people and they need them to understand it is different here."[55]

A local Ahtna resident had similar frustrations about the tendency for NPS to manage with a conservation ethic from Washington DC: "What NPS does is like listening to Shell Oil talk of need for exploration on North Slope. There is never a counter argument on the need to explore. For NPS there will never be a counter argument on need to conserve."

Alterations in the land created by water events give rise to further tensions between the nationally-based NPS mission of "preservation" and the ANILCA requirement to protect local livelihoods. When a tributary of the Nabesna River switched channels in the early 2000s, another family that had been living in the area since the 1960s lost their entire homestead after water poured through their cabin doors, filling the structures with gravel up to the windows. At the time, NPS would not allow them to alter the channel of the creek to switch the course of the flood, contending that this was a "natural event" that should not be mitigated by

[55] Telephone interview conducted by Margot Higgins on December 11, 2012.

human interference. The acting superintendent also contended that the water belonged to the Park and that the "water needs to run where it needs to run," suggesting the enforcement of the national level NPS narrative that "nature" should have primary authority over land management, and, in turn, the lives of local residents in the Park.

Entrenched within the NPS refusal to allow locals to mitigate the impacts of flooding events are national narratives about federal claims to the land. These are just a few circumstances, among many others, that have generated a great deal of mistrust among locals who express narratives of fear that NPS is slowly trying to remove them from Park land that is defined by many unpredictable events. And while individual experiences vary, the narrative that the NPS is eventually trying to rid the Park of its living residents is quite common. This fear of displacement came up in many of the interviews I conducted with local residents. Additional forms of displacement prompted by NPS were mentioned in relation to access to hunting, mining, timber harvest and access to clean drinking water. The mission of NPS rests on saving and protecting natural ecosystems. Precisely how local residents should continue their livelihoods without impairing the scenic beauty and ecological function of the landscape has yet to be spelled out clearly and consistently in an NPS narrative (Kizzia, 2013).

In the next section, I will examine how cases of NPS dismissing flood mitigation attempts are inconsistent with other local decisions made by NPS in relation to flooding events. In the case of the restoration effort of the tourist site of Kennicott, the damage caused by natural events to human structures has been intentionally prevented, yet locals were also largely influential in that process, drawing on their own narratives about non-human actors.

Rifts between NPS and Park Inholders: Flooding Damage Averted

Rivers and creeks can function like iron gates – open to provide free passage when frozen in the winter season, locked shut by vehicle bridge tolls in the summer to "protect" the local communities that are growing in the Park. For example, at the end of the dusty 58-mile drive to McCarthy, which runs over the former rail road trestle of the Copper River and Northwest Railroad, one is still confronted with the roaring glacially fed river that had also functioned as a barrier into the area when mining prospectors capitalized on rich copper ore in the Kennicott area at the end of the 19th Century.

To tackle this obstacle and others, wealthy New York investors built a 20 million dollar railroad[56], which contemporary scholars suggest required comparable effort and magnitude as the Alaska pipeline in the 1970s (Janson 1975). The value of copper in the area was so high that over 50 railroad interests made some attempt to create an open passage into the area. Owned and operated by the Guggenheim and Morgan Alaska syndicate, the six-year construction job that

[56] Value at the time of the railroad completion in 1911.

resulted to build a 200-mile railway from tidal waters in Cordova to the rich copper mines in Kennicott, involved building 129 bridges to cross the many physical barricades created by rain and melting glacier water. These connections were vulnerable, however, and many of them were intentionally constructed not to last beyond the era of copper extraction. Each year these highly technological man-made passages, a few of which were constructed directly on glacial ice, went under extensive repair. Ice flows and spring floods destroyed many of these impressive yet fragile structures only a few years after maintenance of the rail line ceased in 1938 when the Kennecott[57] mines closed.

Ironically, one such bridge at the end of the railroad line in Kennicott lasted far longer than anticipated[58]. Following a heavy rainy season in the fall of 2006, flash floods rushed through the former company town, which had become a primary visitation spot for tourists following the NPS purchase of the former company mining town in 1998. The railway trestle that had functioned as a pedestrian bridge over National Creek finally collapsed (see next chapter on NPS investment in the former mining town as a tourist attraction). While the trestle had allowed for removal of copper ore from the area via a 200-mile train route, the re-adaptation of the trestle as a bridge had allowed a new commodity to thrive -- in the form of tourism. With tourist access cut off to the mill building -- one of the main attractions in town -- NPS was confronted with the task of stabilizing National Creek over which the bridge had provided safe passage. Contrary to the above scenarios I have described with Park inholders, in this case NPS attempted to prevent flood damage on one of its key properties and tourist gateways in the Park. Here a master narrative about the NPS role in catering to the demands of conventional, easily accessible tourism could be interpreted as taking priority over local narratives about health and clean drinking water.

Initially NPS proposed creating a creek diversion with treated lumbers imported from Washington State to help channel the Creek and to prevent future damage of the two-million-dollar replacement bridge. This quickly attracted attention in the community because many community members rely on the Creek as a source of clean drinking water and they were concerned about the potential for toxins to leak into the water. Fifteen years earlier hand painted signs from the community council had identified the area as containing environmentally sensitive drinking water. These signs had been removed, however, because they did not meet NPS code. Community members were especially worried about a particular water collecting spot that was utilized mainly by year round residents in winter when water lines are frozen. They claimed this water source was likely to be directly affected by the toxins from the chemically treated wood. After the issue was discussed at a local council meeting, locals called for an NPS meeting where they could provide input. This well attended meeting heightened the tension between the local desire for continuing their traditional livelihoods and lifestyles (by collecting clean drinking water directly from the stream), and Park management

[57] As mentioned previously Kennecott is the name of the mining company name vs. Kennicott, the name of the town, glacier, and river
[58] A similar flood took place in 1927.

decisions and agency responses dictated by historical and distant policy-making offices in regional and DC offices. Both NPS and the members of the local community came well prepared to defend their position. As one long-time local resident recalls,

> *There was a big public meeting and the park superintendent orchestrated all of her staff to be there and give reports on what the water quality effects would be and why it was essential to have this stabilization and so forth . . . The Park Service was shown to be unprepared, unprofessional, and ill-equipped with the situation. Now ironically it could well be that the timbers would not have necessarily posed any problem for the drinking water – but this is also an important point – because what happened was you had an authority (NPS) that felt it was in control [and] it exerted that control until it got pushed back from the community. And because it had exerted that control overly hard the push back was really strong. There was an escalated conflict and the result of that escalated conflict was that the Park Service couldn't go ahead with its plan.*[59]

The contentious meetings that followed were punctuated by strong assertions of national and local power. Many residents of this community argued that NPS was "Disney-fying" the area and recreating a company town that, like its predecessor, had destructive impacts on people and the land. Pressured by local residents, NPS replaced the proposal for using treated timbers to stabilize the creek with a plan that involved incorporating large rocks instead. Most of the material needs for this construction would have been readily available locally in an area surrounded by mountains and glaciated terrain. Nevertheless, because NPS policy prohibits the agency from mining anything on national park land, rocks were trucked in from 200-miles away in Valdez. In order to soften the velocity of a potential flood and to prevent damaging the new bridge, NPS crews placed large slate grey boulders in a uniform sequence below the Creek.

One local explained,

> *"They're not even in this terrain okay. And [NPS] paid to have them trucked into Kennecott, so there's now a line of boulders in National Creek in Kennecott from coastal Valdez. The image I have is this little parade—this line of trucks coming up the McCarthy road carrying boulders this way. Now, what's out here (points to glacier), carrying rocks the other way? When you're on the Kennecott glacier think about your federal deficit – I won't say your tax dollars. Your federal deficit carrying rocks the other way. There's enough rocks moving this way to probably provide all of the material needs of the western United States."*[60]

[59] Telephone interview conducted by Margot Higgins on March 14, 2013.
[60] Presentation at the Wrangell Mountains Center on June 28, 2012.

Narratives in this case become a vehicle for local resistance by addressing and challenging national narratives that do not apply to local circumstances or conditions. Though this particular individual supports many actions of NPS, he also suggests that there is a degree of bureaucratic blundering that influences certain federal land management decisions. The ecological conditions in Alaska, also challenge national approaches to disaster response and locals are often quick to point this out. Wild rivers tear down two million dollar bridges. Local populations may have a better sense of how to solve problems posed by nature because they are more reliant on nature's resources for their livelihoods. They spend far more time walking on rocky glacier moraines and more time paying close attention to changes in the land than agency officials. They often know the sequence of geological strata upon the land and they have been noting large scale changes in the land. As a child from Fairbanks, one woman visited the Park community of Chinita every summer on family dip netting excursions on the Copper River. "On the way to Chitina we'd pick up ice to prepare to fish. On the way back we'd resupply with ice from the glacier. Now there is no glacier."

"Part of the attraction of being here is that mother nature is calling the shots and we weave our lives around that," said a local resident who first visited the area in the early 90s. This woman is one of the local residents who sometimes relies on National Creek for winter drinking water. Of the recently incorporated boulders from Valdez she comments, " The rocks below National Creek look human placed. I know they are not local rocks. The more we fill the landscape with false truths, the more difficult it is to read it, the less we trust it, and the less inclined we might be to bother about protecting it." While she acknowledges that there are many visible human created geologic stories on the landscape from the mining era, she believes that NPS might be a little more reflexive about the story they are imprinting on the landscape, especially with regard to how, in this case, the geologic imprint re-shapes local stories and access to resources such as clean drinking water. "NPS has a different mandate than in the era of destruction. Just like [the company] Wrangell Consolidated, who processed tailings below National Creek in the post mining era during the 1960s, NPS too has created another visual obstruction. It is a big fat lie in the middle of an authentic story."[61]

By contrast, the gap of NPS engagement with locals is in part what prevents them from implementing more cost-effective, well accepted solutions to their problems. The common separation in the NPS understanding of the social and ecological, and the resulting dismissive narratives about NPS decisions that are told by residents, can create barriers to collaboration and innovation.

Changing Politics of Displacement

Narratives about non-human events are never static, yet they can continue to reinforce the power divides imposed by previous narratives. Parallel to the

[61] Interview conducted by Margot Higgins in Berkeley on December 9, 2013.

spectacular examples of geological changes caused by ice and water in the Park, there have been many changes within the human landscape and at the administrative level of the state. Many Park employees have now lived in the area for over a decade and they too respond to flooding events that impact their property. The Park has had a high turnover rate of superintendents since its formation in 1980 and some superintendents were much more highly tolerated than others. There have been 14 Superintendents since the Park was established in 1980. These superintendents have an immediate impact on ways Park policies unfold. Yet their leadership varies substantially and each individual translates, articulates and implements national policy differently (Hydrick 1984). As one local explained, "Some have an instinctual feel. For most part they have to bumble and learn and in the process they create a hornet's nest. [Then] they kick over that hornets nest for the next superintendent to deal with. This may happen by accident or it may be intentional, but it has a big impact."[62] Correspondingly, the narratives Park residents tell also change from one superintendent to the next and many have gradually accepted the increased NPS presence, particularly when they have been able to benefit from increased tourism.

A local hunting outfitter had never visited a National Park when ANILCA was passed in 1980. Today, he is a pilot employed by NPS and he contends that he is more willing to cooperate with the federal presence. Slowly he is trying to convert a fifty-year-old guiding business into a revised enterprise that still provides small scale hunting, but is also trying to incorporate "eco-tourism" activities such as guided hikes and scenic over-flights for wealthy tourists. A fifty-year presence in the area has helped position his family to make such a transition through long-term social and ecological experience. Though the new family compound is increasingly threatened by another recent flood channel of the Nabesna River, he is more optimistic about the current superintendent who started in 2011. In a 2012 interview, he explained, "the new superintendent he came out and you know it's a whole different attitude, he said we cannot allow this to happen and so he said whatever it takes you know to do this or to change the channel or whatever it is this is what we need to get it done." His experience highlights the significance of individual leadership at the superintendent level and the way some park inholders receive preferential treatment. Yet not every community in the Park shares such as opportunity, given a much longer history of the displacement of indigenous people in Alaska colonial history. [63]

Cascading Displacement From Non-Human Narratives

"I never thought I would see the day when the Nabesna River would run clear in November," Wilson Justin tells me in an interview from across the table in the Chistochina Tribal Council office." In the 60s and 70s Wilson would return to the Nabesna area (on the north side of the Park) where he spent his early childhood, and he recalls that the River would fill with silt when the ice went out. Today, he explains, this River runs by increased rainwater instead of melt from the glacier.

[62] Interview Conducted by Margot Higgins on July 18, 2012
[63] Interview conducted by Margot Higgins on July 11, 2012.

What was once a massive 400-foot architectural feature on the land has transformed to rubble and new vegetation growth. Several new tributaries on the Nabesna have formed since Wilson was young and the River is now far too deep to cross.

Wilson tells people that global warming *ended* in the 1990s, just when the academic and scientific conversation around the phenomenon began to take root and gain rapid attention. "I trace heat melt back to 1953 when Aunt Ruby told me it was the first summer you could not cross the [Nabesna] River. In 1965 my uncle was flabbergasted to see three channels in the river," Wilson adds. This story, Wilson notes, is backed by old time horse guides who speak with astonishment that in mid-summer the Nabesna River was up to swim level for pack horses. He recalls the way the River appeared back then in the eyes of a child[64]:

> *The Nabesna? Let's see what it looked like then. At six years of age I could only see the field lying just past the trees, and what seemed to me miles and miles of openness, reaching in a giant sweeping arc to the Glacier, brilliant in the noon sun. It was only 12 miles away, but I could see the broad blue white back snaking around the corner of the mountain in a sprawling curve that left nothing to chance not in this eyesight or any other. Time comes in patches at 6 years of age and choppy even without the wind. I could not see downriver because of the trees and the creaking alders but I could see upriver and it was a child's forever right from the front of the cabin to the top of the sparkling glacier. It was there, it was always there. The noon sun would sear the river rocks and the heat waves would dance like dervishes first one way and the other. . . I went back over and over for any number of reasons but I never saw Nabesna again, in that light, of that summer under a glacier that promised to be with us forever. The river rose and fell —told elsewhere in other stories of climate change and such. The first time I could look up the river again right out of high school in 1968 I could see a lot brush and new growths along the airfield. I could also see clearly the Glacier was crumbling, and with it all of the sounds of youth and freedom. The why of being left behind was never answered and never spoken too. No one said anything about the Glacier eating itself up finally to seep into the rocks under its once mighty wings. The river changed too from a friend then to foe. . .*

Above is a more integrated narrative between the human and non-human. While NPS and some Non-Native residents might refer to the above as a narrative about climate change, in this case non-human narratives, reinforce a human story of displacement. The idea of friend or foe, extends far beyond Wilson's recollection of the changes he experienced on the river. As Wilson explained in a subsequent interview, the concept of friend or foe also applies to the weather, the government, the military, the people and the way the back country changed in the

[64] Excerpt from an untitled personal essay passed on by the individual on April 16, 2013.

post mining era following the arrival of "outlaws" or people who were more scared of change.

The Ahtna perspective creates little distinction between the animate and inanimate aspects of the glacier. The account about the Nabesna also adds empirical knowledge to challenge the "evidence" of changes in the land that are documented by scientists, park managers and other local residents. Julie Cruikshank (2005) discusses areas in Athabascan oral tradition where people believe that "glaciers are sensitive to smell and they listen. They make moral judgments and they punish infractions (p.3)."

The above narrative of changes in the land shaped by the fluctuating character of the Nabesna River also serves as a broad social commentary, and the disappearance of a type of access to cultural knowledge and identity that his family and others in the Ahtna community have experienced. The reference to "foe" represents a time when this person's family was again displaced from re-establishing land by a new generation of Euro-american settlers that were drawn to the area when the Nabesna mining period ended. Often these more recent arrivals were distinctly focused on living off the land in ways that were no longer available in the lower forty-eight.

Wilson pointedly confronts the NPS and Park resident narratives mentioned in previous sections of this chapter. He challenges the discourse of nature culture separation that non-Natives have made. He explicitly connects the disappearance of the Nabesna Glacier, a rising river and a childhood moment he recalls vaguely, to the displacement he and his family experienced in the 1950s when officers came in and Ahtna children were stripped from their families and sent off to boarding schools. "Someplace in the middle of it all the airplanes came and started taking people away." Wilson contends that "non-Native outlaw families" stole their land from his family during the 1950s. "Understand that from where I was coming from these people were outlaws, where you are coming from they are heroes." The creation of the Park, which followed ANSCA[65] has not benefitted his family at nearly the same scale as many Euro-American families who have been able to take better advantage of tourism.

While this narrative takes place in the past, it continues to resonate with contemporary debates about colonial encounters, park history, climate change, science and local knowledge. Narratives surrounding local knowledge and Native displacement have faded in Wrangell Saint Elias Park and Preserve, due to the increased prominence of current displacement narratives by "non-Native" Alaskans, state policy and scientific studies on climate change. Through the narratives that describe water events and the associated increased presence of new comers –or outlaws– in Wilson's former Nabesna community, displacement continues to unfold directly and indirectly in this Park.

[65] ANSCA the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act is described in other areas of my dissertation.

Conclusion

In the Wrangells, ice and flooding events reveal a conflict between this physical reality of a dynamic landscape and attempts to create stability within it. A long-term local resident tries to preserve islands of stability to protect his property as glacial flooding moves around it. Access to safe water and property is affected not only by the instability of landscape, but also by federal management decisions. NPS tries to preserve its own stability as social and ecological dynamics shift. Narratives about ice and water are reminders of how Native Alaskans once lived and how they have been replaced. Fundamentally, narratives at local and national scales reveal conflicting sets of values that are rooted in history or the U.S. development of the wilderness movement. A river channel changes, but this is part of a larger picture of a larger social instability.

The irony in Wrangell-St. Elias is that while local livelihoods and subsistence activities are so closely regulated, the green house gas emissions of tourists who often fly to Alaska are not, even though they have a much greater impact and threat to the stability of "wilderness" in this national park.

Similar to those narratives that surround wilderness designation, the narratives that I have discussed in this chapter reveal how ideas related to natural resources or non-human events in Wrangell Saint-Elias Park and Preserve have changed over time. These narratives may influence the management of protected areas in several ways: they make claims about access, entitlement, displacement, bureaucracy and appropriate human responses to non-human actors. Many of these narratives, particularly national narratives from NPS are reactive, reproducing society-nature binaries. Several of the NPS management decisions mentioned throughout this chapter are based on the assumption that nature acts on society from the outside, as an independent force disconnected from human experience and interaction. Counter narratives to this are a prominent feature of local narratives against certain NPS management actions.

National park narratives inadvertently align with more subversive narratives. At times, NPS makes management decisions in the name of preservation that are ecologically unsound from a local perspective in the case of drinking water, or from a global perspective through the high use of resources to fly helicopters or to truck rocks into the middle of the Park from hundreds of miles away. This may be progressively the case as national parks are increasingly concessioned out to distant corporate interests who have little interest in local history or needs. Yet in the context of declining budgets local solutions are also likely to gain increasing value.

Glacier melt and flooding narratives such as the ones I have described in this chapter may allow for a better acknowledgement of the diversity of social interactions that might take place in a protected area. Underlying local and NPS narrative conflicts are Ahtna narratives that reveal ongoing displacement and

longer term knowledge about glacier and flooding events that has been largely left out of current narratives.

Chapter Four: Subsistence, Science, and Changes in the Land

Figure 13. daily observations maintained on yearly calendars

On the tattered calendar that lives among jars of canned salmon, moose salami, cranberry relish and pickled garlic, a rural Park resident has been marking daily natural history based observations on and near his land since he purchased his property in 1983. For a 10-year period he only left the park two times, and through almost thirty years of concentrated time on Park land, he has gained a unique perspective on the changes that have occurred in that landscape. He knows that his subsistence lifestyle in the bush depends on his knowledge of the environment as a whole. It is not enough to understand the behavior of moose or bears. He must understand what they eat, how they think during a big snow year or after a forest fire, and how they interact with one another[66].

"See those riverbanks collapsing?" Another woman tells me pointing to the Copper River[67]. "That's the permafrost thawing. Ten years ago we'd have ice on the river by this time." "And now we have animals like cougars coming here, and new plants that compete with our blueberries and rose hips. That's where we always got our vitamins."

Another person reports, "I've seen lots of things. One thing is that king salmon are on the decline right now. Geez there was a few years we got as many kings as we did reds. Now they are very very scarce. Is that a change in the river? I do not

[66] Interview conducted by Margot Higgins on 2012
[67] Interview conducted by Margot Higgins in Glenallen, Alaska on August 16, 2012

know. Is that part of its natural cycle that this happens every 20 years? But definitely king salmon are different[68]."

This chapter asks, how do narratives about local knowledge diverge or converge with that of government officials and to what effect on natural resource management policy? Whose narratives count the most?

Table 3. Summary of local observations of ecological change in Wrangell-St. Elias Park and Preserve from 60 interviews in 19/23 resident zone communities.

Observations related to glacial retreat	• [There has been an] increase of glacial dust • "There are increased respiratory issues in the region and I suspect that has to do with glacial dust." • The (Kennicott) Glacier was a lot taller [in the early 80s]. • The Kennicott Glacier almost reached McCarthy when I arrived here [in the 1970s] • The first time we came out there was one little pond at the face of the glacier or the foot or the toe. . . a little pond. . . [it is] maybe three times the size of this lawn and now it basically runs all the way around on the other side. • I had no clue that lake was over there [pointing to the glacier] until I want to say two years ago when I took a hike over there. I was astounded. I had never seen it before," "that pool at the base of the Chisana Glacier did not exist before.
Observations related to wildlife	• I can only remember what it was like in the 60's and there was an awful lot more game here compared to what there is now. And the decline in the game from the 60's till now had nothing to do in the hunting -- it has to do with range that is weather oriented that we can do nothing about now. • There have been recent sightings of caribou feeding in lakes. I haven't seen that before. • I am seeing moose that have traveled a long distance. They have different body types. • There are more moose • I spent 11 years on that [unnamed river] I have an intimate knowledge 40 miles of that river. When you spend decade you watch how salmon runs change year to year. You see their spawning areas. You know hunt camps. There are places we hunt caribou that I'm sure are pre-history. • There are migration bottlenecks where caribou need to cross. • Three individuals reported cougar sightings (though others dismissed these as more probably lynx)

[68] Interview conducted by Margot Higgins in Chitina, Alaska on September 3, 2012

Observations related to weather change	• We have west wind now. There is no word for west wind in Athabascan culture, but the predominant wind pattern is now westerly. • winter temperatures do not dip as low. • [We are] Not seeing same kinds of temp patterns. No it hasn't happened again. My comment o that winter was if it ever hits 65 below again I will move so fast you will never know I was here. . . It has not hit 65 below since [the early 1980s]. I'm still here. • Certainly I'm noticing warmer winters. Absolutely warmer winters. You can probably get the data for that. When my girls were little it was soooo cold every winter for long periods of time. We just don't get that anymore. You might get 40 below for maybe a week, piece of cake, you know. There was two winters ago when I don't think I pulled out my heavy parka. Wow. It just wasn't cold. If it was cold it was short term. It was twenty below the whole time. It just didn't drop down. It seems like our falls are longer. I do not think it is frosting as early. This is unscientific observation, just day to day to day to day. • I remember when my girls were little in the mid eighties. Once school started mid-August there was frost every morning. Last year I do not know when the first frost was? End of September? October? • It seems like in the last few years the falls have been certainly nicer. And maybe you get a first frost but it is certainly not, you know, we have done moose and caribou and it has been just fine to process it outside. I remember doing it and being so cold that your fingers are going to fall off. I don't know maybe I have gotten tougher over the years. That could be part of it too. You have been doing it for so long, maybe that has been part of it. • Well the first winter I stayed here it got down to 54 below then it was 18 days it never got above a minus 40 and I was house sitting Kenyon's house and they were in Florida. And anything you put in the woodstove burned I mean fast. It's like a dog eating raw meat. And you I would have to go out and take the [rotor] reports but at the same time if I had to do any physical work it was done about noon or 1 o'clock because that was the warmest part.
Observations related to hydrology	• We have more precipitation. • There is more sedimentation, river erosion. • I spent time on the Nabesna River in the 60s and 70s. It would fill with silt when the ice went out. Now rivers and streams run by rain instead of the glacier. • I never thought I'd see the day when the Nabesna River would be clear in November. And we do not know what the impact may be on fisheries. • One of the things that has been noticeable from my view shed, and talking to park people, talking to pilots, talking to guides and people who do subsistence activities is sluffing of the bluffs. Hill movements, erosion, you know, is this melting of ice lenses. What is causing this? Not that I'm looking to what is causing it. I just want to document what is happening. We do see these bluffs changing, moving sluffing, melting out, you know.

	What is it? Maybe not permafrost. Maybe it is just ground water changing. • Definitely I've seen the river erode. It is all erosion and deposition. I do not know that. It is such an extreme river. What is normal? What is not? I would never really say something is normal or abnormal just because it is so dynamic and unpredictable. Water level can go up 3-4 feet in a few hours, it can drop it can erode 20 feet of bank in a couple of hours. Definitely I've seen lots of changes in the Copper River through this whole area. Places where roads accessed the river then they are gone, erode away and [in] 2-3 years it has eaten up hold bank and then it stops it pushes over. • Water temps [on local rivers] has consistently been warmer for over a decade.
Observations related to insects	• Beetles. There are not many around. The interesting question is why did they quit? They look more like ants than beetles. Beetles stopped east of the copper river. • Bark beetles are coming up north. They are at my house in Gakona. They were south, you know in that whole lower Tonsina area, Valdez, and of course the Glen Highway out toward Anchorage. Klutina. All of these forests were mega impacted years and years ago. They are still here and I see them up our way where when these forests were devastated and died we did not have them up north. They are up there now. They are absolutely responsible for more fires.
Observations related to birds	• The swallows were here pretty early this year. They were all around our house and then they just disappeared. And it was weeks later the mosquitoes showed up in force and the swallows have not been back to my house. • Swallow arrival coincides with daughter's birthday May 10 and swallows usually fledge by July 4. This year they were 2 days early.
Observations related to fisheries	• I've seen lots of things. One thing is that king salmon are on the decline right now. Geez there was a few years we got as many kings as we did reds. Now they are very very scarce. Is that a change in the river? I do not know. Is that part of its natural cycle that this happens every 20 years. But definitely king salmon are different • We are seeing fish in streams in late august. [They] used to stop around July 25. These are critical decision points [for subsistence fishing. The best fishing is in late July when it used to be June. Late runs are good when they didn't used to be. They are in good shape at the end of August. • There was extensive drought from the 60's until 1997. Lakes half emptied out. Creeks just trickled. We went decades with no rain in summer. Then

	we had extensive rains from 2006 on. Salmon were waiting by the weirs. As soon as sediment revealed water coming up, there was gathering force. (could be placed in hydrology section too)
Observations related to vegetation	• A proliferation of plant food is changing animal migration. • When I moved here in those early years, there was no vegetation on these bluffs, on Simpson Hill out here. They were just bare sediments" • I think precipitation is different. I think we have a lot more precipitation and vegetation is changing. The lushness the thickness, places you used to walk through are now just grown up. The willows are growing so incredibly fast. . . • I think we have a lot more precipitation and the vegetation is changing. The lushness the thickness, places you used to walk through are now just grown up. The willows are growing so incredibly fast. • My driveway when we moved in was just gravel and it was wide and now . . . thick vegetation is to the other side in just nine years. It is just amazing -- the undergrowth-- how lush it is. • Certainly fireweed were late this year. And cotton seeding from cotton trees was late late late and much much less. It didn't snow [cotton seeds]! That is usually mid June to the 24th or 25th. This year it didn't do it. The fireweed was super late but it still went quick. There are flowers at the top now and we are in august so probably a week late or so from peaking out to the top but they were two or three weeks late to bloom.

These observations by both Native and Non-Native Alaskans reveal instances of local experience that are often not captured in NPS management plans. They also contribute to the theme of non-human forces that shape human narratives that I have examined in Chapter Five. "Lived experience validates lived knowledge," according to Berkes (2008).

All landscapes are shaped by human activity, but in Wrangell-St. Elias the environment is continually being altered by landscape size change that is uninhibited by modern infrastructure, such as dams or a large number of roads (there are only two roads that traverse the Park). The area is also impacted by a changing climate, wildlife migration and other actions of the non-human environment. In addition to Park management plans, these shifts influence substance activities.

These people living on or near Alaska national park land, and dependent on its resources for part of their livelihoods, are, in most cases, very well aware of the biophysical changes occurring around them because they generally spend extensive time on the land and are directly affected by the changes that have occurred there. Change has been noticeably evident to Park residents over the

past 100 years in the Park and Preserve, and future years will likely see significant changes at the intersecting levels of the climate, hydrology and vegetation. Ice-covered valleys will become vegetated. Glacial streams may become deglaciated rivers that flow through Alaska's interior. Lakes may cease to freeze entirely and new patterns of vegetation will emerge and evolve.

Residents who have a long association with the Park and Preserve, often pre-dating NPS, keep records of these events and patterns with journal entries, photos and oral histories, such as those offered by old timers or tribal elders, who provide accounts of how things used to be and how they have shifted. Such observations might be used to re-examine how people might relate to the world without the strongly embedded human-non-human dichotomy, that I described in Chapter Five.

According to a recent Natural Resource Condition Assessment, considerable data gaps persist for many of the Park's natural resources (Drazkowski 2011). As one wildlife ranger explained that while an inventory of the vascular plant flora of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve was conducted from 1994 to 1997 and in 2003, there are still large areas in the Park that have not been surveyed and park managers often lack sufficient knowledge about most rare species. Yet such a statement also suggests that these plants are separate from other Park resources and that these natural resources should be examined in isolation from one another.

Agency meetings typically include statements from NPS biologists or fisheries scientists about "the state of the resource." Currently there is one central ecologist who is responsible for the 13.2 million acre Park and Preserve and the park budget offers only about one cent per acre for monitoring (Hecht and Davies 2012).

NPS is far from able comprehensively to monitor resource use and enforce its own laws and regulations. For example, NPS is hopelessly behind schedule in meeting its own requirements for monitoring the vast acreages of national park land for signs of climate change. The revisions of formal management plans for those allotments required to be based on current ecological conditions are thus also far behind schedule and not always in sync or relevant to what local people observe. Even if NPS monitoring attempts did catch up, the agency does not have the funding or staff that would be necessary to effectively monitor many provisions of those management plans on an ongoing basis.

While local NPS staff expressed interest in these records, both managers with in NPS and the National Wildlfe refuge expressed various challenges when it comes to incorporating local observations. Some called this knowledge anecdotal. Others expressed the challenge of fitting these observation into more quantitative "scientific" management plans. For example, an upper level employee at the Tetlin Wildlife Refuge just outside the Park boundaries explained that "Traditional Ecological Knowledge" (TEK) and science are completely separate.

Those who claim to practice TEK do not understand that." While he acknowledged that multi-generation long-term views on the land are valuable, he told me he was tired of hearing complaints around in public meetings. "They are two different processes. Like silver and gold thy do not mix," he said. "Science" according to him is "about testing hypotheses and eliminating bias." Thus, this manager adheres to a traditional narrative of the meaning of "science" and the ways it should be conducted.

The term Traditional Ecological Knowledge itself has been contested. Instead, I refer to Local Ecological Knowledge to encompass the diverse, extensive, and often entwined relationship, between human cultures and the land. Drawing on Berkes (2008) and others I treat subsistence as a set of socially embedded practices that include pre-harvest processing and redistribution activities as well as the actual harvest. Native Alaskans have long pointed out that knowledge is not really knowledge at all in the western definition of the term; to them it is a "way of life" (Nadasdy 2013). With the belief that not only do plants and animals have a life system, but also that rivers, mountains, and glaciers are alive, these ideas and practices do not often fall with in the realms of western science.

Success for subsistence practices requires place based knowledge and understanding of resource availability and distribution or temporal patterns of access to the resource. And while the prime motivation of the subsistence practitioner may be obtaining the resource, the actual need met among both Native and non native Alaskans, may be more social and cultural. Subsistence was a form of pride for people because it represented a way of providing for themselves, making them less reliant on groceries brought in from Anchorage (La Vine and McCall-Valentine, 2014). People I spoke to across race and economic division also described subsistence as a form of wealth.

As observed by social theorist James Scott (1998), local knowledge draws on life experience as well as the knowledge gained by thousands of years on the land. Scott defines Metis as "a wide array of practical skills and acquired intelligence in responding to a constantly changing natural and human environment (p.319)." A lifetime of careful local observation and the fine-grained knowledge of locality several Ahtna Alaskans described extends beyond immediate their time frame and incorporates ancestral knowledge through the narratives that have been passed along from one generation to the next, despite the gaps that have been imposed through colonialism and cultural loss. Descriptions regarding the lack of "creepy crawlers" or the rise of salmon in a local lake are invaluable to understanding localized change. Nevertheless, a man expressed frustration that scientists and Park managers do not investigate these observations and the prompts locals offer for further research. With regard to the creepy crawlers he asked, "where are they coming from, will they go back, will they change the composition of the lake?"

A number of Park residents commented on the lack of good scientific data and sound consistent monitoring by NPS. In some cases, people were well aware of

the larger structural and financial causes for this gap within the agency, but among others, there was a fair amount of distrust and blame placed toward the agency. Many individuals made fun of the seasonal or three or four-year field biologists that they encountered in the field. As one of my informants told me "you can get observational data and habitat data if you speak to people [in the park] or learn to talk [to them]. NPS has lots of statistical data on salmon, but no inference data [from park residents]. There is no observational data about water temps which has consistently been warmer for over a decade."

One of the biggest obstacles for submitting data seemed be influenced by past experience with government officials, (particularly NPS). They expressed a general feeling, deeply historically embedded in this region, that local data or observations would not be valued or adequately incorporated in natural resource management plans without adversely impacting local needs. Many people did not want to share knowledge about changes in the land out of fear that it might create further restrictions around subsistence use.

Tensions also arose between what is perceived as an NPS prioritization for keystone conservation species like grizzly bears and dahl sheep instead of paying more attention to the species that are used by locals for subsistence. An Ahtna resident commented, "The Chistochina subsistence report is complete, but they (NPS and Alaska Fish and Game) missed a few valid points. No one asked about king salmon in the 60's and 70's in specific locations like Atele Creek, Indian River, Sinona creek, the inlet by Mentasta Lake. These are all places people visit [for subsistence]." Another person commented, "My issue with data is not about being better or worse. [It is the] perfect fit for NPS that doesn't do much good for the rest of us. This is the NPS mindset. Data is conveniently not recorded, overlooked, and [not] subject to an interpretive stance."

Local knowledge in Wrangell-St. Elias includes many of the same components as conventional western science, including distinct observations of change, premises about causality, and general theories underpinned with a paradigm of knowledge. Observations of change by local knowledge are not confined to ecological dimensions but also include social components and as well as intricate observations of social and ecological interaction. Yet the Park is also a primary example of where management regimes that are attractive to one segment of a society or local community may be deemed less desirable by another. It is a place where there are different sets of stakeholders who possess different levels of power in relation to national park management. Scholars have suggested that normative values such as uneven power relations, history culture do not fit easily into management models (Nightingale 2011.) There are a number of local observations and related approaches to natural resource management that do not get captured in current management attempts, despite the best efforts on behalf of NPS.

Data from my interviews [Table 2] suggests that while local observations can't be exported directly into existing scientific data sets, they are far from anecdotal.

While local knowledge in Wrangell-St. Elias does not often fit precisely within the traditional western science approach that NPS uses for management plans, it is still be valuable, culturally and scientifically. There should be a way to keep track of (and honor) these observations in a way that might be complementary to the existing database. Sight based nuance and intellectual property politics also shape the ways that such knowledge can be shared and integrated and this must be carefully considered in the context of building trust between NPS and local park residents.

There is a great deal of room for NPS to recruit local residents in current park monitoring efforts such as weed monitoring and many park residents expressed interest in such activities. Park residents and particularly members of Alaska indigenous communities, need to be involved in monitoring efforts and creating natural resource management agreements related to shifting climate conditions from the ground up or they may further stir social tensions. For example, as I observed in one case, when a long time local resident stumbled upon a team of brand new NPS hires who were mostly from out of state to do a weed monitoring effort, he expressed a small degree of frustration and concern. This individual had not been invited to provide input toward this effort, though he had been watching a much more broad array of shifting plant migrations in the area. He inquired if the team was aware of all of the coastal plants he had recently noticed that were showing up in the Alaska interior and they had not. This information suggested to him that NPS has very little idea of what is actually going on beyond a particular resource management plot or single isolated monitoring effort.

There needs to be a greater consideration of how natural history observations can be shared between local park residents and natural resource managers in a way that respects local communities for a lifetime of observation that often exceeds that of individual, more temporary, natural resource managers. Park managers may need to think about the limits of scientific knowledge and embrace more uncertainty and unpredictability. Though the current ecologist has been in her position for over a decade. another central challenge is to keep such information updated and relevant in a high-turn over work environment, such as NPS, when the next group of natural resource managers steps in to the job.

There is growing momentum on a national level to begin keeping track of such local, non-western science observations, especially in the context of climate change. This sentiment is especially strong in the region that encompasses Wrangell St-Elias National Park and Preserve. But at the same time that Alaskans take pride in their ability to engage in such observation and knowledge collecting, the area also bears the precedent and ongoing occurrence of uneven power relations and the recognition of whose knowledge counts (Kofinas 2007). As scholars of local knowledge, citizen science and participatory action research have noted (Fortmann 2008, Berkes 2008, Kofinas 2002, 2007), integrating local knowledge into current scientific monitoring programs will not be a simple "cut and paste approach" (Cote and Nightingale 2012, p.480). Instead there needs to be a more a critical examination of the role of knowledge at the

intersections of social and ecological systems to capture how power plays out through natural resource management models and how competing values come up against one another.

Given the physical characteristics of this park, tied with its long human history and anticipated changes and fluctuations, however, Wrangell-St. Elias may offer one of North America's best opportunities for understanding, and managing, shifts in physical habitats, ecological and social communities and for understanding how all of these dynamics are dependent on one another, and deeply intertwined. The late Nobel Prize winning social theorist Elinor Ostrom (2009) called for the need to establish a common framework between local knowledge and the various discourses of western science for explaining complex social-ecological systems. Without such an integrated framework she wrote, "isolated knowledge does not cumulate." Such an integration would stand outside of the exiting norms of integrating "Local Ecological Knowledge," with pre-existing western management regimes.

Conclusion

In Wrangell-St. Elias National Park local residents, agency officials and non-human residents have actively shaped an "inhabited wilderness." This is a place where native people and non-native people, native rocks and non-native rocks, residential histories and national histories, local governance and federal governance, rub up against one another and often collide. Some people visit, some people live it. In this dissertation, I have examined the interaction of local and national narratives around management conflicts related to wilderness, natural resource and cultural resource management. There are a number of other areas where conflicts between local and national narratives have arisen including access, which I hope to address in future writing.

ANILCA is vague. It was intentionally vague due to the highly charged atmosphere under which it came about, according to the retired ANILCA coordinator of 30 years. Interpretations of the complicated legislation continue to play out in a dynamic human and non-human landscape. ANILCA challenges NPS to manage both a living and evolving natural system as well as living and evolving cultural social system with attention to both Native and Non-Native residents of Alaska. Rural park residents, part time residents, and the state and federal government must negotiate contradictions on many levels: between conservation and recreation; among diverse and often opposing histories, the variety of worldviews of different actors, state authority and local governance.

While NPS management decisions provide a cohesive narrative that fits with a national preservation priority, local stakeholders construct alternatives to explain their environment and they position these narratives within contested political, historical, and ecological contexts. NPS management decisions are not always self-evident or obvious to rural residents of the park. Neither is the power NPS enacts, or fails to enact, to move from preservation priorities, natural and cultural resource knowledge, to management action and practice. In addition, local experience, history and practices are often misunderstood or disregarded by Park managers.

Among a diverse group of park residents that include people from urban and rural populations, Native and non-Native Alaskans, out of state residents, back to the landers, and preservationists, there are a number of constituencies that converge around knowledge claims about biophysical processes, park management and rights access the non-human environment. This cohesion was hardly present at the formation of the Park in 1980. While the historical divide took place primarily between the NPS and preservation activists and rural Alaskans, these divergent groups have often formed coalitions around Park management. With regard to NPS management and ideas about the human relationship with the non-human world, there are some shared values among all local residents. At the same time, certain residents of the area in and around Wrangell-St. Elias, particularly Native Alaskans, have often faced greater

difficulties in gaining political power. This divergence raises important questions about power relations, knowledge production and Park policy.

Through an analysis of conflicting narratives around a particular set of non human actors, I have demonstrated how NPS has inadvertently become more sensitive to the narrative of newcomers, or relative newcomers in Wrangell Saint Elias Park and Preserve. Many of the post mining, pre-park establishment, and post park establishment communities in the Park, including tourists, have inadvertently received preferential treatment through the government.

Of course it is largely through ANILCA that such cherished traditional practices and livelihoods are able to continue. A wild way of living is vanishing, yet it is an opportunity that only a few people in the United States have experienced and benefitted from. Co-evolving with the landscape is a distinct privilege that has evolved—not only because of the ANILCA legislation, but also due to the prior ravages of disease, colonialism, and the direct displacement of Native people. While they often lead exemplary lifestyles modeling sustainability and a living wilderness that includes ongoing living histories, local residents sometimes cling to narratives that are out dated and subversive in relation to any government regulation. These narratives represent a frontier mentality that is no longer viable, or socially acceptable, particularly to address and seek redemption for an uneven path of economic development.

At the same time, it is challenging for the NPS to solidify its own reputation as a federal agency that is often less attached and responsible to local concerns than it is to adhering to national policies. The gap of NPS engagement with locals, however, is in part what prevents them from implementing more cost-effective, well-accepted, culturally sensitive solutions to management problems. The resulting dismissive narratives about NPS decisions that are told by residents can create barriers to collaboration and innovation.

There is a widespread call among local park residents for less influence from Washington and for more non-federal input that can be communicated to inform park management. One resident who first visited Alaska in 1976, cautiously welcomed park designation, and he continues to engage with NPS around management decisions, encouraging others to do so as well. “How do you protect something? How do you idolize that? How do you express that even to yourselves, to the community? It’s a hard dilemma and communication is the only way to do it. That’s why we are constantly haranguing the park service to communicate, communicate, communicate. I have been haranguing my community because a few weeks ago the park service got 14 people to tell us what they were going to do this summer and only three people from the community came to listen.”

I have argued that the reputation of this area as a pristine wilderness or as an integral piece of the nation’s “last frontier” has not occurred without a series of human interventions. These have stemmed from social, political and economic circumstances within the region and beyond, and also through its ongoing

connection to national and international markets and political affiliations. The conflicts in Wrangell-St. Elias are emblematic of clashes throughout the remote rural areas in Alaska, and the United States at large, over the past few decades, and they mirror broader social, cultural and economic changes. These contestations represent conflicts over the transition of primarily subsistence-based rural economies to capitalism, conflicts over property rights and social control, racial and cultural frictions. Integral to these contestations is the competition between differing ideas about wilderness, natural resource and cultural management, as I have discussed in my chapters. In rural places that are quickly shifting from traditional natural resource-based production to "emerging rural economies (Sayre 2014)" and cultures of natural and cultural resource consumption, understanding the interaction of local and national narratives becomes increasingly important.

As the Wilderness Act reached its 50th anniversary during the time of this writing, there is a coinciding and growing debate about how to think about, and treat designated wilderness in the 21st century. The experience of this small group of Alaskans who have a distinct and unique relationship with wilderness, may have implications for the nearly 110 million acres of wild lands that the government has set aside as protected areas across the United States. This research is useful for helping to strengthen relationships between NPS, the State of Alaska and park residents. It might be used facilitate improved park management and the development of interpretive materials that capture a more holistic socio-ecological history of the park for use in educating the public and orienting new employees to the cultural context of the park.

Negative and cautionary narratives about NPS by park residents continue to persist, even among those people that were in favor of national park and wilderness designation. On a broad scale, such narratives may also be leveraged for national meta-narratives about the inefficiency of the NPS, particularly in its management of remote Alaska Parks. In an October 2013 report, Senator Tom Coburn, R-Oklahoma underscored Alaska's national parks as being particularly inefficient. "Given the remoteness of 'the Last Frontier' state, it does not come as a surprise that Alaska is home to some of the least attended and least accessible units," Coburn wrote. "However, it may come as a shock that one park unit in Alaska costs more than $1,300 per visitor to operate, the highest subsidy per visitor in the entire National Park System." While Coburn attributes the "subsidy" per visitor in Wrangell Saint Elias National Park to be $62 per day, narratives around the NPS attempt to save a two million dollar tourist bridge are ripe for leveraging political opposition to national parks at local, state and national levels. This example also reinforces the well-known national narrative tension between preservationists who have largely been the residents of sophisticated urban Centers such as New York or San Francisco who visit Alaska as tourists, and the lumbermen, miners, hunters and ranchers that did not as a rule, advocate scenic, cultural and recreational conservation. Nevertheless, in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve many of these former opponents of "wilderness" have also received uneven benefits from tourism since Park establishment in 1980.

Collaborative governance between local and federal management holds promise for generating learning and innovative solutions to complex resource management challenges. However, from a local perspective, engaging with state or national level government agencies can continue to be a top down experience from an agency that that is embedded in bureaucracy and national mandates. At the same time, to demonstrate public accountability, NPS must comply with complex constraints and a number of antiquated policies, including the lack of retention of local employees, which may constrain collaboration and innovation between local and national governance. By revealing the narratives that express divisions between these actors, and thus threaten management of the Park, I also show that there are structures and actions in place that can be better leveraged and boosted by understanding how various local and national narratives interact, dismantling unrightfully embedded power structures by increasing the incorporation of local knowledge in park management plans.

The problem with the kinds of simplifications I have discussed in this dissertation – an uninhabited wilderness, static histories and ecologies, and western scientific rationalizations for knowledge, among others– is that the narratives being simplified are not entirely clear to policy makers and land managers before they simplify. The rationale for one level of abstraction is the basis for the next level of abstraction. A different response to this oversimplification is to pay more attention to the interaction between local and national as well as historic and contemporary narratives in shaping the management of cultural and ecological resources. By giving greater attention to the interaction of local and national narratives, a new space for imagining alternative narratives might evolve. Managers of protected areas and cultural histories might better conceive of these models if they tried to build their understanding of how to manage the system based on a greater attentiveness to the interaction of particular narratives at local, national and global scales. Understanding how people make sense of their interactions with the non-human environment and with one another might allow for more effective, just, and more widely accepted policy and management interventions to be made.

My hope is that my dissertation might offer a narrative analytic that the NPS and the diversity of people living in and around national parks or protected areas can incorporate to guide action into the future. This might be another foundation for policy and improved community relations, that can the highlight barriers, traps and pitfalls that accompany management decisions, that can guide action that supports local communities, and that create a more transformative and thought provoking experience for the visiting public. Many of the leaders within NPS have good intentions, and a strong passion for the work they do, but because they lack a coherent and effective social theory of race, class, and social change, they tend to produce management plans that have little impact or that create local controversy.

In May 2015, I was asked to give a presentation to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area to share my research with those who are facing similar local opposition to national park management in the bay area. I realized there are many connections between local residents in Wrangell-St. Elias and those in Muir Beach or Pt. Reyes. These are the kinds of connections I hope to continue to cultivate through my research. By reflecting on the possibilities and limits of national park management as we enter our second century of the NPS in 2016, my desire is to open new possibilities of thought and new spaces for forgotten narratives as well human understanding and knowledge of the land to thrive. I argue that there are emerging dynamic integrated narratives that can potentially reconfigure the outdated principles that have dominated national park experience.

Afterward

Historians often like to imagine history as it could have been. In Wrangell-St. Elias, human and non-human actors might have shaped a very different outcome for the area that is now the Park and Preserve. The geologic make up of Wrangell-St. Elias–that which spurred the mining boom of the early 1900's, is almost identical to the make up of Bristol Bay, an area in Southwest Alaska with a large deposit of porphyry, copper, and gold. Several multi-national corporations, including Rio Tinto and Mistsubishi, have proposed to extract what may prove to be the richest deposit of gold and copper in the world on state mining land. This is the same state mining land that was up for grabs in the 1970s, much of which became preserved as wilderness.

Unlike the very minor scars left behind by the Kennicott Corporation which make it a tourist attraction today, the proposed Pebble Mine would create an estimated 10 billion tons of mining waste that would be permanently stored in the area and a mining complex, or contemporary company town, that could span up to 20 miles (EPA, 2012). Environmentalists, commercial and subsistence fisherman almost have almost unanimously joined forces to stop the mine. Home to the world's largest salmon run, the area is also a significant attraction for tourists, especially hunters and fishermen. Some refer to Bristol Bay as "America's fishing legacy," similar to the arguments that preservationists made about the ANILCA legislation being part of "America's wilderness legacy" in the 1970s (Turner 2012).

If Bristol Bay had been protected as a national park in the 1970s, there would much less controversy today. It was primarily the fear of large-scale mines and extensive road building that pushed preservationists to argue for the protection of Wrangell-St. Elias. Without that infrastructure copper and gold would have been much too expensive to reach then, as it continues to be today. Given the shifting dynamic of local and national narratives, even those opposed to wilderness designation in Wrangell-St. Elias might consider that the highest level of federal protection has done some good.

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