

Gates of the Arctic

Question: Why did Congress establish the Gates as a 7 million acre wilderness park?

Answer: Although the boreal forest reaches up the southern drainages, with stands of spruce and birch, most of the park is tundra clad. The park contains habitat for and migration routes of the western arctic caribou herd which has recently suffered a severe population decline, and is prime habitat for the barren-ground grizzly bear, Dall sheep, and wolf, all of which require extensive ranges and would be perpetuated within the park complex. The park complex is also important for raptors, as peregrine falcons and gyrfalcons nest throughout the central Brooks Range. Scores of lakes within the area support grayling, lake trout, arctic char and northern pike.

Question: Would not both the Administration and S. 49 do away with the park, and replace it with two relatively small (by Alaska standards) widely separated parks surrounded by Preserves?

Answer: Yes.

Question: But this defeats Congress's goal, does it not?

Answer: Yes.

Question: As Dall sheep are the primary species of interest to the commercial guides, their clients and other sport hunters, can you point out other Dall sheep areas in Alaska used by sport hunters?

Answer:

- Wrangell-St. Elias National Preserve
- Western Brook Range, upper Noatak National Preserve
- Eastern Brooks Range, State land and Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
- Alaska Range outside the Parks
- Talkeetna Mountains
- Portions of Chugach Mountains

Question: But you say in your statement that "nonetheless, we believe some very large areas should remain closed to sport hunting." By eliminating the very large Gates park as it now exists, are you not contradicting one of your own objectives?

Answer: Mr. Horn will probably try to claim that the two "island" parks the Administration and S. 49 would leave are large enough. But they cover only portions of drainages.

Question: Gates is unique in having a subsistence village -- Anuktuvuk Pass -- inside its northern boundary. How do these villagers feel about S. 49 and the Administration's proposal?

Answer: Anuktuvuk Pass villages are opposed to S. 49, as is the north Slope Borough, and the Tanana Chiefs, who represent villages near the southern flank of the Park-Preserve.

Question: Could you add the Native-owned lands to the map so that we can have a better idea of the size of the park?

Question: One of your criteria is that conflicts between hunters and non-hunters should be avoided. Why are you proposing to create major conflicts (firing lines) between present park users and sport hunters during hunting season, as non-hunters hike between the two small island parks, and river runners float down out of them into sport hunting areas?

Answer: ?