

Chapter 2—Introduction

The North Campus area of the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) is a unique and valuable resource for the university. The NC consists of approximately 1,100 acres of largely forested land on the north-to-northwest side of campus. The area provides valuable research, education, and recreation opportunities for UAF faculty, staff and students, visiting educators and scientists, and community members.

North Campus lands have a long history of use that precedes the establishment of UAF. The land now occupied by UAF—including North Campus—is known to Tanana Athabascan people as Troth Yeddha' ("wild potato hill"). Athabascan names for prominent UAF and NC features are documented in Alaska Native Language Center archives (see Appendix A). The NC includes the original research lands dedicated to the Agricultural Experiment Station that was established in 1906. It includes historic recreation trails, and an incredible diversity of natural habitats for class field trips and scientific research. Users of these lands represent diverse groups, from K-12 and university students to scientists studying cold soils, wetlands ecology and more. The area includes a rifle range, long-term biological and geophysical research sites, a popular local fishing spot, and multiple-use trails that are used year-round for university and community educational programs, research and recreation.

The UAF Campus Master Plan from 1991 (UAF 1991; hereinafter referred to as CMP 1991) recognized the value of campus lakes, bogs, arboretum, taiga, and fields for research and classes. "It shall be a matter of policy to protect and encourage use of campus lands for research wherever possible." Protected North Campus lands included the Institute of Arctic Biology Biological Reserve, bird and wildlife observation stations around Smith Lake, the Boreal Arboretum and permafrost monitoring sites (UAF 1991, p. 49). The MPC also stressed the value of NC trails and included recommendations for their preservation and enhancement. (ibid., pp. 71-72). The plan highlighted the necessity for creating a balance between maintaining the natural state of the NC and allowing human use. Planners recommended that all future uses be reviewed by the MPC or a designated subcommittee to ensure that the use is consistent with the survival of the essential qualities of this resource (ibid., p. 50).

UAF's current Campus Master Plan (UAF 2002; hereinafter referred to as CMP) was approved by the Chancellor and the Board of Regents in 2002 (see www.uaf.edu/mastplan/). Chancellor Lind, at the recommendation of the MPC, established the North Campus Subcommittee to develop a plan specifically for the North Campus, acknowledging this area as one of UAF's "jewels in the crown" (see Appendix B). The CMP states that "it is critical that current uses continue and that only minimal development associated with outdoor teaching, research and recreation be permitted. The...North Campus Subcommittee of the Master Planning Committee will guide future planning efforts for this area." (UAF 2002, p. 8-17). The MPC directed the Subcommittee to develop a plan that would:

1. identify the multiple uses and users of the North Campus
 2. review the draft UAF Skarland Trail System Management Plan, make suggested changes and incorporate its recommendations,
as appropriate, into the land use plan
 3. identify all appropriate uses and locations for education, research and recreation.
 4. maintain the long-term integrity of research sites and facilities on the North Campus, and
 5. establish a review process for all proposed actions on North Campus lands.
- (ibid., p. 9-20, 21)

On April 7, 2004, the NCS submitted the draft North Campus Plan to the MPC for consideration. In July 2004,

A15. Provide direction and information signs throughout campus that are clear and consistent in theme, location and design.

A17. Ensure roadway and intersection designs emphasize safety and efficiency.

A18. Create safe and attractive corridors close to all campus roadways for non-motorized uses.

A20. Establish direct connections to the UAF trail system from points throughout campus.

A23. Preserve the agricultural function and character of the Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station lands.

A24. Protect the integrity of the North Campus for education, research, and recreation, including maintaining and promoting the

UAF trail system as a significant campus and community asset.

Moreover, additional narrative in the CMP speaks to the assets and values of importance in planning and managing NC lands:

An extensive system of trails, used widely by the campus and Fairbanks communities, winds through the land north and west of the built campus. The trails and the land that they occupy are a prized resource of the campus. The draft UAF Skarland Trail System Management Plan (Todd 2000) should be taken into account by the newly formed North Campus subcommittee as part of a comprehensive campus master plan upon its completion and approval by the Master Planning Committee and the Chancellor. (UAF 2002, p. 5-11)

Significant portions of the remaining campus property are designated for outdoor research, education and/or recreation. Specifically, this includes the North Campus area, the Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station and the Fairbanks Experimental Farm Fields. Remaining areas that are outside of the Tanana Loop perimeter need to be formally evaluated as to suitability for building sites. (ibid., p. 8-4)

The open space between the museum and the Natural Sciences Facility offers an ideal place for a centralized entry into the trail system from the built campus, with a second ski hut located there to mark the entry. The ski hut could potentially be coupled with an aurorium, viewing deck, and other features. Other opportunities should be sought to tie campus pathways to the trail system. Clear trail markers and directional signage throughout campus should announce the trail system, making it more visible and accessible. (ibid., p. 8-5)

With advice from the North Campus subcommittee, develop trails in the core campus areas that connect Lower Campus, West Ridge and the North Campus Trail system. Develop informational signs to foster use and appreciation of trail systems. (ibid., p. 9-5)

The North Campus Subcommittee will work closely with trails groups and UAF Facilities Services to ensure that maintenance and improvement of trails continues in an effort to continually enhance this important community asset. The North Campus subcommittee will have primary responsibility for review and comment on proposed trails projects. (ibid., p. 9-21)

Explore opportunities with the Fairbanks North Star Borough to link borough trails (non-motorized uses only) with the Skarland Trail System. (ibid., p. 9-21)

A Timeline of North Campus History

This list highlights key dates, actions, and events relevant to North Campus. This list is not meant to be

