

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve



Resource Analysis for the Johnson Tract Transportation and Port Site Easements



What is Happening?

The National Park Service (NPS) is requesting your input as it prepares to conduct a resource analysis to evaluate two proposed easements needed to provide access to the Johnson Tract within Lake Clark National Park (Park). This comment period, ending on June 24, 2024, represents the first opportunity for you to get involved in the project. After gathering public input, the NPS anticipates preparing a resource analysis for public review and input, tentatively planned for the fall of 2024.

How to give input

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve welcomes your input and comments during this civic engagement process. If you wish to give input, please submit comments and questions to:

ONLINE* (preferred):
<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/LACLJohns onTractEasements>

MAIL*:

Lake Clark National Park & Preserve
Johnson Tract Transportation and Port
Site Easements
Attention: Superintendent
240 West 5th Avenue, Suite 236
Anchorage, AK 99501

This public comment period ends on June 24, 2024.

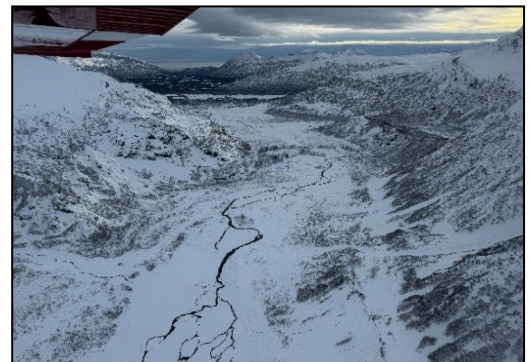
How to stay informed

For more information on Lake Clark National Park & Preserve, visit the park's website at: <https://www.nps.gov/lacl>

Background

During the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) lands selection process, Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI) was not able to make its full land selection. Through the courts and a subsequent negotiation process with the Department of the Interior and the State of Alaska, the Cook Inlet Land Exchange was passed by Congress and signed by the President in 1976 (1976 Act) to fulfill CIRI's ANCSA land selections.

As part of the 1976 Act, CIRI relinquished ANCSA land selections around Lake Clark and in exchange received the 20,942-acre Johnson Tract, a known mineral prospect on the west side of Cook Inlet, 125 miles southwest of Anchorage, Alaska, and at the head of the Johnson River. The Johnson Tract consists of two smaller tracts: the South Tract, an 11,342-acre tract where CIRI received both surface and subsurface rights, and the North Tract, a 9,600-acre tract where CIRI received only the subsurface rights.



View of the Johnson River in December 2023, looking southeast.

The 1976 Act specified that the Secretary of Interior (Secretary) shall convey two easements—a transportation easement and a port site easement—across what would become Lake Clark National Park. The easements are to allow for the transportation and shipping of minerals extracted from the Johnson Tract. The 1976 Act requires that the Secretary and CIRI mutually agree upon the location of these two easements.

In 2019, CIRI and HighGold mining company (now Contango Ore, Inc.) entered into a 10-year lease of the Johnson Tract for mineral exploration. In 2020, HighGold worked with the NPS for authorization to access NPS land around the Johnson Tract for certain activities associated with their mineral exploration. In January of 2023, CIRI began discussions with NPS to advance the conveyance of the easements.

Proposed Easement Areas

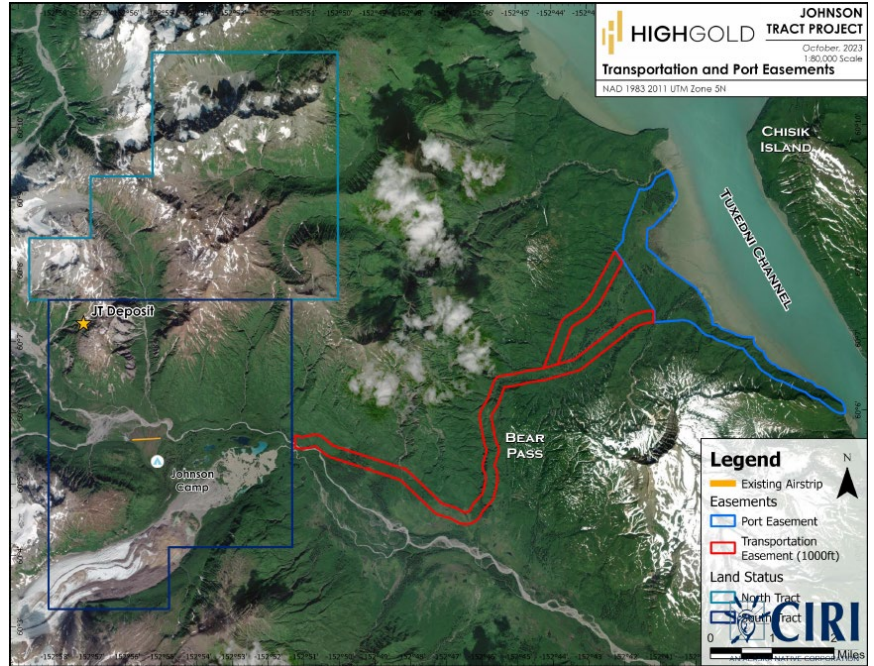
The locations of the proposed port site and transportation corridor to reach the Johnson Tract are still being explored. The image to the right shows CIRI's preliminary proposal for transportation and port site options.

Next Steps

The conveyance of these easements is not subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as specified by Section 910 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). The NPS will prepare a resource analysis to evaluate the proposed easements and will release the document for a 14-day public review period this fall (2024).

The resource analysis will evaluate the proposed easement areas as well as the site-specific environmental consequences of initial planning activities associated with CIRI's development of the transportation corridor and port site. Planning will be limited to activities that are reasonably necessary for CIRI to design, engineer, and permit their project. Those activities may include geotechnical assessment, hydrological assessments, and cultural and environmental resource surveys. The resource analysis will help NPS ensure that appropriate terms and conditions are included in the easements.

*Note: Comments will not be accepted by fax, email, or by any method other than those specified above. Bulk comments in any format (hard copy or electronic) submitted on behalf of others will not be accepted. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including the personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee we would be able to do so.



Proposed corridor alignment and port site easement options from CIRI as of October 2023.



Above: View of Tuxedni Bay and Channel from Bear Valley.



Left: View of Tuxedni Channel and Chisik Island from Bear Valley.