

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 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, the MPC submitted the final plan to the Chancellor for review, comment and approval. On July 21, 2004, the plan was approved.

Definition of the North Campus

The North Campus is defined as the area north-to-northwest of UAF's main campus and bounded by Miller Hill Road on the west, Yankovich Road on the north (south of the private property boundary when applicable), Ballaine Road and Farmers Loop Road on the east, and on the south by the main campus and the Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station Experiment Farm (see Figure 2.1 and 2.2).



FIGURE 2.1—Map of North Campus Boundaries

— Approximate boundary of North Campus area

— Approximate boundary of Arboretum

— Approximate boundary of Biological Reserve

FIGURE 2.2—Map of North Campus Major Features



Approximate boundary of North Campus area

* College International Geophysical Observatory

** Alaska SAR facility antenna

UAF Campus Master Plan Guidelines Related to North Campus

UAF's Campus Master Plan provides guidelines for planning and development on the Fairbanks campus as well as a process for implementing the plan. As part of that overall effort, the Chancellor appointed an eight-member standing subcommittee focusing on the North Campus. The NCS hired Dr. Peter Fix, Assistant Professor of Natural Resources Management, to coordinate the planning process. The subcommittee was charged with developing a draft master plan consistent with the goals and action statements of the CMP. These goals are:

1. Create an efficient and attractive campus environment conducive to learning
2. Improve community access to the UAF campus
3. Make vehicle circulation and parking simple and direct
4. Promote safe and efficient travel throughout campus for pedestrians and non-motorized uses
5. Highlight natural assets of campus and the unique northern environment

Specific action statements of the CMP of relevance to the NC are listed below. Although some action statements do not directly address NC lands directly (such as completing Tanana Loop), they may nevertheless be relevant to future planning and management.

- A7. Provide lighting throughout campus that maximizes safety, enhances wayfinding and minimizes light pollution.
- A9. Identify and evaluate sites on campus land outside the Tanana Loop perimeter for special function buildings such as a research and development park, public safety, parking, community service and other support functions.
- A12. Complete Tanana Loop.
- A13. Increase parking along the perimeter of campus and subsequently reduce parking in the interior.
- 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.



The Elysian sculpture is framed by fall leaves on an early September morning.

UAF PHOTO BY TODD PARIS



North Campus trails in autumn.

- 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 exhaustive but to reflect major actions that have contemporary significance. Additional information about the history of UAF can be found in Cole (1994) and about the North Campus itself in Parrish (1998), Fesler (2001), and Holloway (2004).

Prehistory—Tanana Athabascan people traditionally used and occupied the area where UAF is now located. The campus site was called Troth Yeddha?—‘wild potato hill’ (see Appendix A).

1904—Citizens of Fairbanks petition the US Government to establish an experiment station in Fairbanks

1906—On March 22, 1906, land surveyed by C.C. Georgeson in 1905 was reserved and set apart for the use of the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the purposes of an agricultural experiment station. This land included most, but not all (1393.97 acres), of sections 6, 31, 1, and 36.

1908—First land cleared in North campus area for agricultural experimentation (Potato Field)

- 1911**—Roads constructed into the North Campus for access to agricultural lands; land cleared near Smith Lake for agricultural experimentation, now the T-Field; longest continuously cultivated land in Alaska
- 1915**—On March 4, 1915, sections 6, 31, 1 and 36 were granted to the Territory of Alaska as the site of an agricultural college and school of mines except for any land in these sections previously claimed under the Homestead Act or other laws. Land not abandoned by the Department of Agriculture could continue to be used for an experiment station.
- 1917**—On May 3, 1917, the legislature of the Territory of Alaska established the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines (AAC&SM).
- 1923**—On October 25, 1923, a contract between the Department of Agriculture and Board of Trustees, AAC&SM, split the land grant sections allowing the experiment station to expand to the entire sections of 1 and 36; the easterly sections 6 and 31 were abandoned by the Department of Agriculture to be used as the AAC&SM. Signed by President Coolidge.
- 1929**—On Feb 23, 1929 (Federal Register) Benefits of the Hatch Act and Smith-Lever act extended to the Territory of Alaska (this basically provided for a partnership of funding between the territory and the federal government for funding of the experiment station and all other benefits of those acts), but it wasn't until 1931 when money was finally appropriated.
- 1931**—On February 23, 1931, funds were appropriated to extend benefits of the Hatch Act and Smith-Lever Act provided that all lands, buildings, etc. now used by the Department of Agriculture experiment stations be turned over to the AAC&SM.
- 1932**—Construction of the first major recreational trail, Skarland, begins
- 1946**—On May 22, 1946, the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture turned over all experiment station lands to the University of Alaska.
- 1950**—Ballaine Lake Research Area established by UAF Geophysical Institute (see Appendix C)
- 1950**—On May 19, 1950, the Board of Regents created the Smith Lake “park,” with a 100-yard buffer zone surrounding it
- Mid 1950s through early 1960s**—9-mile, 12-mile, and Miller Hill trails established; first Equinox Marathon held using trails
- 1964**—Exotic Tree Plantation contract (15 years) between USDA Forest Service and UAF; currently maintained by School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences



Buildings in the Ballaine Lake Research Area from 1957 to 1962.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GEOPHYSICAL INSTITUTE OPERATIONS

- 1967**—47 acres fenced into the Biological Research Reserve by Institute of Arctic Biology for research activities
- 1968**—UA Board of Regents created the University of Alaska Arboretum on approximately 300 acres of North Campus
- 1980**—Memorandum of Understanding between UAF and Fairbanks North Star Borough to preserve and protect historic trails and connections with other non-campus trails
- 1981**—Alaska Department of Fish and Game helps establish rifle range
- 1994**—Synthetic Aperture Radar Antenna (SAR) construction agreement between UAF and NASA
- 1997**—On Sept 24, 1997 20-year agreement between US Geological Survey and UAF for College International Geophysical Observatory (CIGO);
- 2001**—Lease with USGS was terminated and College International Geophysical Observatory (CIGO) operation was transferred to UAF.