

Alaskan Alpine club LUP Application responses

Project Description: Describe in detail your intended use of state land. (State land also includes all tide and submerged lands beneath coastal waters and all shorelands beneath other navigable waterbodies of the state.) Discuss development and activities. (Attach additional pages as necessary.)

The Alaskan Alpine Club proposes to construct the Doug Buchanan / John Waterman Memorial Hut near the base of Nenana Mountain in the Alaska Range. The structure is intended to function as a small emergency shelter and base camp for experienced, non-commercial recreational users traveling in the area. Both Doug Buchanan and John Waterman were well-known and valued members of the Fairbanks outdoor community, and placing this hut in a remote alpine setting they would have appreciated is an important part of honoring their legacy.

This region of the Alaska Range offers significant opportunities for backcountry activities including geological fieldwork, backpacking, mountaineering, skiing, and river travel. Nenana Mountain has served as a destination for such trips for more than three decades. However, rapid and highly variable weather conditions often limit safe travel and restrict the ability of users to take advantage of short windows of stable conditions. The proposed hut would provide a secure, dry, six-sided structure where parties may shelter temporarily while waiting out brief weather events, thereby increasing safety and feasibility for experienced recreational users operating in this terrain.

Use of the hut will be intentionally limited to non-commercial purposes. Commercial guiding operations or other for-profit activities will not be permitted to use the structure. The Alaskan Alpine Club will manage user expectations through clear communication and coordination with the backcountry community to ensure the hut is used appropriately, intermittently, and in accordance with its intended role as an emergency shelter and temporary base of operations rather than a commercial hub.

Potential users will be encouraged to coordinate with the Alaskan Alpine Club prior to trips when feasible, particularly during peak seasons, to reduce the likelihood of overlapping use and to avoid overcrowding. This coordination will help ensure that the hut does not become overused at any given time, preserves the self-reliant nature of travel in the area, and maintains compliance with Leave No Trace principles and general wilderness ethics.

The intent of this project is not to promote or advertise increased access to the area, nor to encourage higher levels of visitation. Access to this terrain remains naturally self-limiting due to its remoteness, the logistical complexity and financial cost of reaching the site, and the advanced technical skills required to travel safely on glacier and alpine terrain. The hut is intended solely as a

modest safety resource for those who already understand and respect the unique recreational and wilderness qualities of this portion of the Alaska Range.

The Alaskan Alpine Club will assume responsibility for stewardship of the structure. The club plans to conduct semi-annual maintenance trips to inspect the hut, address any needed repairs, and restock limited emergency supplies. These trips will ensure that basic emergency rations and essential medical items remain available for unplanned use by backcountry travelers in need.

Overall, the proposed hut is intended to support safe, low-impact, and responsible backcountry recreation while preserving the remote character of the Nenana Mountain area.

Site Description: Briefly describe the current condition of the proposed site of use, noting any trash, garbage, debris or signs of possible site contamination. (If significant, we recommend you provide pictures to establish initial conditions.)

The proposed site for the Waterman/Buchanan Memorial Hut is located on a stable bedrock outcrop situated within an unnamed glacier basin on the south side of Nenana Mountain. This exposed bedrock provides the most practical and secure foundation in the area, as it avoids the instability associated with constructing directly on glacial ice while offering immediate access to climbing and skiing terrain within the surrounding cirque.

The selected site is naturally sheltered by several large, existing boulders positioned upslope and around the outcrop. These features offer passive protection from potential rockfall and from the unlikely occurrence of a major avalanche reaching the location.

Prior to construction, minor surface preparation will be required. This may include moving small loose rocks or boulders that currently occupy the footprint of the proposed structure. No blasting or major ground disturbance is anticipated.

Describe the natural vegetation – ground cover, trees, shrubs – and any proposed changes. Describe the location of any estuarine, riparian, or wetlands and any noticeable animal use of area.

The proposed hut site contains minimal to no vegetation. The bedrock outcrop has only recently become exposed due to glacial retreat, and as a result, there is no established soil layer or significant plant growth. Construction of the hut and installation of anchor points will therefore not require the removal or disturbance of vegetation.

Site Access: Describe how you plan to access the site, and your mode of transportation.

If your access is by aircraft, specify the type and size of aircraft:

Access to the proposed site near Nenana Mountain has historically been achieved by fixed-wing aircraft or by overland travel from the Denali Highway. However, Most access to this specific glacier basin has occurred via helicopter due to terrain and weather limitations. For construction of the Waterman/Buchanan Memorial Hut, we intend to use a helicopter to transport pre-fabricated hut panels and materials to the site via sling load.

The most practical and efficient staging location is the seasonal helicopter base near Glitter Gulch along the Parks Highway, where a commercial operator already conducts summer flightseeing tours. Utilizing an existing aviation operation minimizes additional disturbance and allows for the shortest and safest flight route into the project area.

Satellite imagery of proposed Hut location:



Image 1: Proposed bedrock feature of hut



Image 2: Proposed bedrock feature of hut



Image 3: Proposed bedrock feature of hut from main glacier valley



Image 4: Prefabricated hut during practice session piecing structure together

