



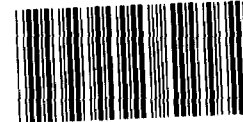
UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

August 26, 1982

Mr. Russell E. Dickenson
Director, National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240



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Dear Mr. Dickenson:

Subject: Alaska Regional Office Needs To Improve Personal
Property Management

In May 1982 we visited Alaska's Denali National Park and Preserve, where we noted that replaced and excess personal property had not been reported to the General Services Administration (GSA) in a timely manner and had not been protected from damage and deterioration, as required by Federal regulations. Poor administrative practices at Denali and at the Park Service's Alaska regional office were the cause of these problems. We visited Denali as part of a followup on our review of health and safety standards in national parks and forests ("Facilities in Many National Parks and Forests Do Not Meet Health and Safety Standards," CED-80-115, Oct. 10, 1980).

We looked into these problems further to determine (1) the amount of replaced and excess personal property at the Denali Park, (2) whether the problem exists at other parks in Alaska, and (3) the reasons why the property was not handled properly. We interviewed regional office and Denali Park officials, reviewed regional office and park property records, and studied Federal regulations and Department of the Interior property management regulations.

DELAYS IN REPORTING REPLACED AND
EXCESS PERSONAL PROPERTY TO GSA

Federal property management regulations (41 C.F.R. 101-43.101) require each executive agency to continuously survey property under its control to assure maximum use and to promptly make excess property available for transfer. Agencies must report promptly to GSA any excess personal property or property to be disposed of under the exchange/sale authority (41 C.F.R. 101-43.311-1, 41 C.F.R. 101-4.4, 41 C.F.R. 114-46.4). Pending disposal, each agency is responsible for the care and handling of the personal property (41 C.F.R. 101-45.104).

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During our visit to Denali National Park and Preserve, we noticed 21 vehicles and items of equipment including 5 automobiles, 12 pickup trucks, 1 tractor, 1 snowplow, 1 bulldozer, and 1 road-grader parked outdoors in a maintenance yard. The acquisition cost of this property was about \$134,000. Some of the vehicles were in various states of disrepair; for example, we observed vehicles with flat tires and one vehicle with a broken window. After the park had replaced or identified the vehicles and equipment as excess, it waited from a few days to 18 months before reporting the items to the Alaska regional office. The maintenance foreman at the park said the delay was an oversight. By the time the regional office finally reported the items to GSA in June 1982, from 19 to 37 months had elapsed from the date the items were replaced or identified as excess. By November 1980 or earlier, the park had identified as excess 32 other personal property items including snowmobiles, generators, engines, and appliances. As of July 1982, these items were still at the park and had not been reported to GSA. The maintenance foreman at the park told us that none of the personal property had been maintained since the date it was replaced or identified as excess. Furthermore, regional office officials told us that extreme weather conditions at the park probably damaged some of the equipment.

We cannot determine the exact loss to the Government caused by the improper handling of this property because we do not know the resale values of the items at the time they were replaced or became excess and their current resale values. According to the area utilization officer, GSA Personal Property Division in Alaska, the property probably lost 20 to 30 percent or more of its resale value in the past 2 years, depending on the extent of weather damage.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED IN PARK SERVICE'S ALASKA PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Property management has not been a high priority in the Alaska regional office. For example, although a physical inventory of capitalized personal property is required every 2 years, the Chief of the region's Contracting and Property Management Division, said that it had been over 3 years since an inventory was taken at Denali Park. Part of the problem, according to the Chief, is that the regional office does not have an accurate inventory of personal property for the national parks in Alaska. The Associate Regional Director for Administration confirmed that the region's property records were in disarray and that adequate inventory control of personal property currently does not exist.

According to the Regional Director, part of the region's recordkeeping problems may be attributed to changes in the Park Service's role and responsibilities in Alaska. He said that because of the workload associated with the 1980 addition of vast areas of land to national parks in Alaska, the change from a district office to a regional office, and some staffing problems, not all administrative tasks may have been completed properly.

A recent Park Service directive focused on the need to improve personal property accountability, but the regional office has not effectively implemented the directive. Special Directive 82-2, dated February 5, 1982, discussed procedures for establishing primary and secondary accountability for personal property, taking inventories, and conducting surveys on lost, stolen, damaged and unserviceable property. Even with this directive, however, personal property management problems still exist in the Alaska region.

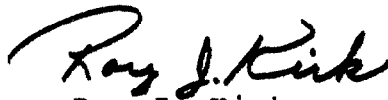
The Chief, Contracting and Property Management Division told us that the situation we found at Denali was not unique and that replaced and excess personal property was also located at other national parks in Alaska.

In view of the problems we noted at Denali National Park and Preserve, we recommend that you direct the Alaska regional office to

- identify and report replaced and excess personal property to GSA in a timely manner,
- maintain replaced and excess personal property properly until turned over to GSA, and
- improve its property management practices, including developing and maintaining an accurate inventory of personal property at National Park Service areas in Alaska.

We appreciate the cooperation of Park Service personnel in Alaska during this review. Please advise us within 30 days of the actions you plan to take on our recommendations. If you have any questions, please call me on 376-8212 or William R. Swick on FTS 399-5494.

Sincerely yours,



Roy J. Kirk
Senior Group Director