



+1 (b) (6)

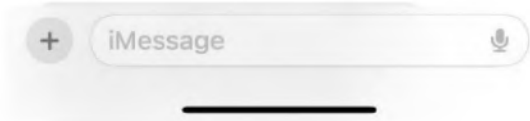
iMessage
Sun, May 26 at 5:52 PM

(b) (6) this is Brooke Merrell at Denali National Park. I apologize for not responding to your call yesterday, staff just got to you message in a very full box.

I'm available until 7 tonight if you still want to touch base on the flag issue, and around tomorrow. If you text before calling, I'll know to pick up. Take care.

Thanks much for the response, I am flying presently I will text you tomorrow and see if you're available. Thanks again I know you're busy.

Mon, May 27 at 10:16 AM





Text Message
Sun, May 26 at 5:55PM

(b) (6) - this is Brooke Merrell at Denali National Park. I apologize for not responding to your call yesterday, staff just got to you message in a very full box.

I'm available until 7 tonight if you still want to touch base on the flag issue, and around tomorrow. If you text before calling, I'll know to pick up. Take care.

I will call in 10 minutes if that works.

+ Text Message

I appreciated you making a point to acknowledge the time in service for seasonals too



Merrell, Brooke in chat 5/17 11:56 AM

[Go to message](#)

Hey (b) (6) do we have the contract SROs online somewhere where I can start looking to see if we have restrictions on contractor vehicles out the road? We're responding to a complaint to Sullivan that we (b) (6) I think) asked a contractor (I'm guessing sub) to not fly a large **flag** on his truck. Thanks if you have any thoughts!

See Less



(b) (6) 5/17 11:56 AM

I'm drafting a response to your email now



(b) (6) 5/17 12:05 PM

Hey, I am going to work from home for a bit...I'm still waiting for (b) (6) to call me.



Merrell, Brooke in chat 5/17 12:06 PM

[Go to message](#)

Sounds good. We probably side-tracked him with this **flag** issue 🗨️

See Less

5/17 12:06 PM

Sounds good. We probably side-tracked him with this flag issue 🗨️



(b) (6) 5/17 12:07 PM

yeah...that one was kinda odd - I thought (b) (6) was our POC with FHWAs?

5/17 12:09 PM

Instead of (b) (6) you mean? I think they tag team a bit with (b) (6) taking the visitor relations/concessions piece. Got thoughts? My one thought is that Granite is administrative traffic, and we would not allow NPS traffic to have a distracting large flag on the restricted portion of the road for the reasons (b) (6) told (b) (6)... but looking for park policy that upholds that.

5/20 10:00 AM

Hey (b) (6) let me know if you have had a sec to read the string on the congressional from Sullivan's office. I'm going into a call with the regional director right now on it.

(b) (6) and I did not find much of a hook for our request, but here is my draft proposed language:

Good afternoon,

Thank you for your inquiry regarding a constituent comment from a contractor working in Denali National Park who was told by a Federal Highways contracting officer to remove a large flag affixed to a work truck as it was counter to National Park Service practice. While I did not directly know about this instance, it is true that on the restricted portion of the Denali Park Road we manage to minimize visual disturbance on the landscape to allow for visitor experience.

The Denali Park Road is an early success story of managed access to allow for maximum visitation. Since 1972, visitors transfer to bus to travel into the heart of 6 million acres of largely untouched Alaska landscape. The bus operation allows half a million visitors a year to visit Alaskan wilderness while avoiding the overcrowded experience often found in other parks with high visitation. Only park buses, inholder vehicles, and administrative traffic are allowed past mile 15 of the 92 mile road. The park manages to achieve standards that include how much traffic any given vehicle encounters, where vehicles stop within key iconic viewsheds, and vehicle impacts to the wildlife that are a major draw to visitors. The NPS works with inholders and concessionaires to ensure that vehicles on this portion of the road are neutral colors that blend with the landscape. In addition, visitors are instructed to keep hands, cameras, etc. inside vehicles to avoid unfamiliar stimulus that could drive wildlife away from the road corridor, further interrupting the visitor experience.

With visitors currently driving to mile 30 of the Park Road and soon visiting to bus along the length of the road, a flag becomes a visual impact to the natural landscape and a potential deterrent to roadside wildlife viewing. The request to the driver of this truck was in response to a complaint by a visitor.

The contractor employing the constituent in question here is working on the high-profile Pretty Rocks Bridge project. The contractor has been an excellent partner in ensuring the best possible visitor experience even as this large construction project is accomplished. Contractor traffic is considered administrative traffic along the restricted portion of the road, and the contractor has been amenable to conforming to NPS administrative traffic practices. I am certain that we can work together to address this employee's concerns.

I understand and support this person's right to being able to display the flag on roadways accessible to the public. However, the visual and potential wildlife impacts by an administrative vehicle is counter to the successful management plans and goals of the restricted road. I'm happy to discuss this further, and will follow up with the contractor.

At a minimum, I think this needs to get back in the escalation queue with FHWA and Granite.

At a minimum, I think this needs to get back in the escalation queue with FHWA and Granite.

5/20 10:17 AM

After that call...want to just sump on the phone?



(b) (6) 5/20 10:17 AM

Actually am done now if now works for you?

(b) (6) 5/20 10:40 AM

Next IRB is June 25th



(b) (6) 5/20 10:59 AM

(b) (6) is going to put together a meeting with Granite to discuss the flag incident and see if we can reach some common ground using the partnering charter conflict resolution provisions as a tool. Would you like to participate in the discussion when it happens?

5/20 11:17 AM

Sure- if available.

May 21

(b) (6) 5/21 8:23 AM

Morning Brooke - In light of (b) (6) s edict that flag flying is against Granite policy, do we have any remaining action on this issue? Any need to meet with FHWA/Granite?

5/21 9:10 AM

No need. If you sense any need to do some smoothing of feathers, happy to take action there too. Talked with Sullivan's chief of staff last night, hopefully that's that. I'll be reminding folks to always always include you when dealing with Granite.



(b) (6) (b) (6) 5/23 9:42 AM

Brooke - Wanted to circle back with you on the media inquiry... are we hoping to have FHWA participate in the response? Are we going to go it alone? Do you need me to help coordinate anything? Just asking because current plan is I'm going to go out on the road but if I need to be involved and stick around, I can do that instead.

5/23 9:45 AM

No, go. We're still trying to figure out how to deal with this...fringe media request. It'd be good to get Granite an awareness at least. Right now the direction I'm going is to not engage with this particular group but to prepare a short statement explaining that we are not anti-flag and talking about how we manage administrative traffic on the restricted portion of the road to minimize visual impacts to visitors- for in case more mainstream media picks it up.

👍 1

Awareness to Granite regarding what employee communications are happening.

(b) (6) (b) (6) 5/23 9:46 AM

Copy that.

5/23 9:55 AM

Glad you went, but when you get back- it may be beneficial to get a convo together between me and (b) (6) and whoever is appropriate. This is delicate, I want to assure him we aren't expecting or pushing heads to roll on this one and aren't riled up. That said, this is taking a great deal of time, it'd be nice to not have to respond to these random inquiries about whether we are "antiflag"...

5/24 11:02 AM

First crack at my short message for frontline staff:

Visitors to Denali National Park and Preserve can fly flags, there are no restrictions on flags in the park. Administrative vehicles on the restricted portion of the road are managed to have the least amount of impact on visitors as possible, and part of that is not having bright colors that detract from the viewscape or engage in actions that may move wildlife away from the road corridor.

Oops, was trying to put in a space. Hold on.

Visitors to Denali National Park and Preserve can fly flags, there are no restrictions on flags in the park. The NPS flies flags at many of our facilities in the park.

Visitors to Denali National Park and Preserve can fly flags, there are no restrictions on flags in the park. The NPS flies flags at many of our facilities in the park.

Administrative vehicles on the restricted portion of the road are managed to have the least amount of impact on visitors as possible, and part of that is not having bright colors that distract from the viewscape or engage in actions that may move wildlife away from the road corridor.

OOo I missed your draft. I like your language.

Visitors to Denali National Park and Preserve can fly flags, there are no restrictions on flags in the park. The NPS flies flags at many of our facilities in the park.

On the restricted portion of the Denali Park Road (mile 15-92) we manage vehicles to minimize visual disturbances to offer park visitors wildlife viewing in an exceptional wilderness landscape. On this road section administrative traffic, including the bus transportation system, is managed to be as unobtrusive as possible from the quantity of vehicles to their natural paint colors.

I think that simple message should work for frontline staff. I'll start in on the inholder response and all employee email soon. How do you feel about the level of response.

(b) (6) called in support, says silence best where possible.

(b) (6) 5/24 11:08 AM

Your draft looks good. How do you feel about sending it on to (b) (6)? Maybe as an alert to (b) (6) and (b) (6)?

5/24 11:09 AM

Fine. In fact, I'll make sure they get the AE email. Good catch.

(b) (6) 5/24 11:18 AM

A remote scenario if this doesn't blow over is Alaskans having a flag rally Mile 0-15 this weekend. Which would actually be kind of cool 😊

5/24 11:25 AM

I was thinking the same!

I kind of want to put a flag on my POV.

(b) (6) 5/24 11:41 AM

(b) (6) and I lead a volunteer group for the (b) (6) on Saturday in preparation for Memorial Day services. It's pretty cool to see flags at all the gravesites. Even cooler to see families come out with kids to help.

❤️ 1

(b) (6) 5/24 12:26 PM

Do you want me to send the email to (b) (6) and (b) (6)?

5/24 12:28 PM

Yes please!

👍 1

(b) (6) 5/24 1:28 PM

(b) (6) Have you been able to start your weekend yet?

Or are you still at the WHRS?

5/24 1:29 PM

Just want to send an all employee email. If you are still on in 10, I'd love your look at that. I'm at WHRS, (b) (6) and (b) (6) just arrived and we'll wander Talkeetna as tourists!

How late are you working today?

(b) (6) 5/24 1:30 PM

(b) (6) I'm available all day (most of the EA staff is off). Will definitely be here for anything you would like reviewed

5/24 2:08 PM

Here's my all employee email:

Team Denali,

This Memorial Day weekend, we have some interesting inquiries regarding the American flag coming in. Last night a local blog made a post about Denali that is being interpreted as that the park has banned flags. As you know, flags are not banned in the park. Flags are flown at Denali facilities and can be found public and employee private vehicles, campsites, and homes in the park. Here's what I know about this latest line of questions:

Last week a visitor complaint was forwarded to the Federal Highways contracting officer regarding a large flag flapping on a contractor vehicle. The contracting officer correctly told the employee that, with bus traffic starting on Monday, the park manages administrative traffic on the restricted portion of the road to minimize visual disturbances to offer park visitors wildlife viewing in a wilderness landscape.

By the time I came up to speed on this interaction, Granite leadership already weighed in acknowledging their commitment to keep a low profile during visitation season. They have been a very good partner in minimizing impact of a large construction project to the park and the community.

The individual has reached out to at least one local outlet to express frustration with this instruction. Today, frontline staff have been fielding calls responding to the story. If you are fielding questions, your supervisor or team lead has some language that can be used with visitors asking about the issue. Those wanting to lodge a complaint or ask questions can fill out a comment card or be pointed to the superintendent's email address. Team, as with all internal emails, please do not forward this outside of the NPS.

If you have questions about the Denali Vehicle Management Plan or how we manage administrative traffic on the restricted portion of the road, please reach out through your supervisor or team lead, or to myself.

I'll take advantage of this all employee email to express my gratitude for this great country, and for the generations of Americans who laid down their lives to protect American values. Memorial Day at Denali can be hectic- the kick off of a busy summer. I encourage us each to find time to reflect on the sacrifices made so that we can live how and where we do.

Honestly, it is with heavy heart that I contemplate this Memorial Day knowing that there are those this weekend who feel that I and the NPS have disrespected the flag by how we manage the Park Road. Know that I have a deep love for our nation and for the flag, and the rights for all Americans that it represents.

Sincerely, Brooke

(b) (6) 5/24 2:17 PM

This Memorial Day weekend, we have some interesting inquiries regarding the American flag coming in. Last night a local **blogger** made a post about Denali that is being interpreted as that the park has banned flags. As you know, flags are not banned in the park. Flags are flown at Denali facilities and can be found **on** public and employee private vehicles, campsites, and homes in the park. Here's what I know about this latest line of questions:

Last week a visitor complaint was forwarded to the Federal Highways contracting officer regarding a large flag flapping on a contractor vehicle. The contracting officer correctly told the employee that, with bus traffic starting on Monday, the park manages administrative traffic on the restricted portion of the road to minimize visual disturbances to offer park visitors wildlife viewing in a wilderness landscape.

By the time I came up to speed on this interaction, Granite leadership **had** already weighed in acknowledging their commitment to keep a low profile during visitation season. They have been a very good partner in minimizing impact of a large construction project to the park and the community.

The individual has reached out to at least one local outlet to express frustration with this instruction. Today, frontline staff have been fielding calls responding to the story. If you are fielding questions, your supervisor or team lead has some language that can be used with visitors asking about the issue. Those wanting to lodge a complaint or ask questions can fill out a comment card or be pointed to the superintendent's email address. Team, as with all internal emails, please do not forward this outside of the NPS.

If you have questions about the Denali Vehicle Management Plan or how we manage administrative traffic on the restricted portion of the road, please reach out through your supervisor or team lead, or to myself.

I'll take advantage of this all employee email to express my gratitude for this great country, and for the generations of Americans who laid down their lives to protect American values. Memorial Day at Denali can be hectic- the kick off of a busy summer. I encourage us each to find time to reflect on the sacrifices made so that we can live how and where we do.

Honestly, it is with heavy heart that I contemplate this Memorial Day knowing that there are those this weekend who feel that I and the NPS have disrespected the flag by how we manage the Park Road. Know that I have a deep love for our nation and for the flag, and the rights for all Americans that it represents. (my edits/additions in bold. Looks good)

5/24 2:18 PM

Based on (b) (6) debrief of today, I'll add some of (b) (6) points and more on visual impacts

5/24 2:18 PM

Based on (b) (6) debrief of today, I'll add some of (b) (6) points and more on visual impacts

Candid input on the tone? Hard to write an email that will land okay with an employee flying a flag AND a wilderness diehard...

(b) (6) (b) (6) 5/24 2:24 PM

I'd caution too much emphasis on impacts to wildlife since we don't have any data to support that claim. I think responding to a visitor complaint is our job. The American flag brings up a lot of emotions. I'm not sure we can win this one by providing a lot of justification. However, if the complaint had been lodged by a Veteran for disrespectful flag protocol, we would have more folks supporting us.

5/24 2:26 PM

I agree, I don't want to say too much...or too little. Leave it as is?

(b) (6) (b) (6) 5/24 2:26 PM

That would be my recommendation



5/24 2:28 PM

Thanks for being the BEST sounding board. I'll respond to (b) (6) once I knock off here. I think I'll respond to inholder email tomorrow.

Hey, if I'm up this way tomorrow, can I check in about (b) (6) volunteering? That's awesome that you do this!

Hi Sarah- the director got a letter from Senator Sullivan on the flag issue, which is blowing up. Want to circle up on how we bring them up to speed?

Creachbaum, Sarah S 5/25 9:49 AM



Sure. Happy to.

5/25 9:49 AM

Should I try to loop Pete in?

Creachbaum, Sarah S 5/25 9:50 AM



Yep

5/25 11:15 AM

Spoke with (b) (6) acting CR. The visitor center is getting overwhelmed with comments, and we're going to move to a local IC with him as lead. External roles will continue as you described.

Creachbaum, Sarah S 5/25 11:17 AM



Understood. So sorry Brook.

5/25 12:10 PM

On w granite and FHWA

Creachbaum, Sarah S 5/25 12:10 PM



Understood. Please give me a call as soon as you are done.

Creachbaum, Sarah S 5/25 12:31 PM



<https://mustreadalaska.com/alaskans-with-trucks-cars-and-flags-flying-high-are-organizing-a-convoy-to-denali-national-park-entrance/>



Alaskans with trucks, cars, and flags flying high ...

Alaskans offended by the Denali National Park Superintendent who banned the American flag from a...

mustreadalaska.com

1

Creachbaum, Sarah S 5/25 12:49 PM



Message conveyed.

Creachbaum, Sarah S 5/25 12:49 PM



Message conveyed.

5/25 12:52 PM

Got time for a quick call?

Creachbaum, Sarah S 5/25 12:53 PM



Yep

5/25 1:16 PM

Hey- it might help for me to reach out to staffers and let them know that I was able to confirm with Granite that no NPS employee ordered the flags be removed. I know we said pens down with them, but how is that?



Granite thinks a Tuesday PR is likely, as well.

Creachbaum, Sarah S 5/25 1:24 PM



I think that would be good and also relay that our boss is calling their boss.

Creachbaum, Sarah S 5/25 3:35 PM



Who was the news outlet that asked for information?

5/25 3:41 PM

Let me check if more came in but

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6) morning radio show (Tuesday- broad conservative audience)

It'd be great to do (b) (6) today. Short talking points- no NPS employee ordered Granite to remove flags. There is no ban on flags in Denali.

to remove flags. there is no ban on flags in Denali.

Creachbaum, Sarah S 5/25 3:43 PM



Cool. Good to hear. Understand Pete is on it.

5/25 3:44 PM

Great, thanks for supporting.

Creachbaum, Sarah S 5/25 3:50 PM



They sure took their sweet time!





What do you think about me sending an all employee email with the info in the briefing statement? It would be along the lines of one I have drafted in response to an inholder inquiry. I'd take your input 😊

Hi (b) (6)

Thanks for your email. I understand that a local blogger wrote about a contractor employee working on the Pretty Rocks Bridge site who says he was instructed by NPS to remove a large flag from his work vehicle while in the park.

There is no ban on flags in Denali National Park. It took me a minute with the holiday weekend, but I've now confirmed with staff, Federal Highways, and Granite that no NPS employee instructed Granite leadership or employees to remove flags from vehicles. My understanding is that Granite has a company policy that may cover what can be displayed on company vehicles. It's been challenging to get accurate information into the blogosphere so I welcome the chance to clarify with this group. I've shared with this group before and do again here that Granite has been a good partner in making efforts to keep the visitor experience as uninterrupted as possible during a construction project of this size.

Have a good Memorial Day weekend,
Brooke

Christian, Peter A 5/25 4:53 PM



I think it is in keeping with your track record of reaching out to employees with timely information. No harm in conveying the truth here.



5/25 5:32 PM

Hey, is the media statement just what goes for approval? Or is it something we hand out.

Christian, Peter A 5/25 5:33 PM



yes

5/25 5:33 PM

Like both

Christian, Peter A 5/25 5:33 PM



OK. Going to forward to WASO Comms and copy Sarah.

5/25 5:33 PM

Hold on I'm still reviewing for accuracy two minutes

Call me?

5/25 5:43 PM

Denali manages administrative traffic on the restricted portion of the road, between mile 13 and 43, to minimize impacts to the viewshed while tour and transit buses are running, and Granite has been an excellent partner in meeting that goal.

Christian, Peter A 5/25 5:43 PM



Just shared with you. Clean it up as needed.

5/25 5:48 PM

Awesome. Convoys at 2:00 ish tomorrow, If I get the thumbs up I'll try to talk to (b) (6) and (b) (6) tonight

5/25 6:36 PM

So... FHWA just responded to my talking points with a bit watered down version of what we talked about this afternoon. Back to a forwarded complaint forwarded by FHWA. Here are his comments- I likely won't talk about Granite policy and leave it up to them. We can tweak "the contractor" when we get approval.

No NPS staff ordered the removal of flags from contractor vehicles. My understanding, based on conversations over the past several days, NPS **did not** order flag removal. NPS advised the FHWA of complaints about the flags, FHWA advised our manager and our manager asked the workers to remove the flags.

Flags are not banned in Denali National Park

Denali manages the restricted portion of the road to minimize impacts to view shed and wildlife, and Granite had been an excellent partner in meeting that. We appreciate the positive remarks, but would you be opposed to using "the Contractor" in lieu of Granite? Speaking for the regional team, we understand the Park's objective to provide unimpeded views of the natural environment and will do our part to uphold that objective by keeping a low profile and preventing unnecessary distraction- especially in the public areas. We are more aware of how sensitive this can be now.

My understanding is that Granite has an internal policy that covers what can be on company vehicles. Not sure this will help a whole lot. Our vehicle policy prohibits modifications or advertising on vehicles without company approval. Here's the most pertinent provision in the policy: 3.5 Advertising – No advertising matter or stickers are to be displayed on Company vehicles unless approved in advance by the Company. (e.g. Political bumper stickers, sports team's logos, college logos, etc.

□

Christian, Peter A 5/25 8:14 PM



copy

5/27 1:42 PM

Hello! My name is (b) (6) and I host the morning radio show on (b) (6) in Anchorage Alaska. I would love to have Superintendent Merrill on my show this Tuesday if possible for a quick phone interview. This social media fire storm seems unnecessary and I would like to offer a forum to discuss the whole American flag brouhaha.

Thank you so much and I hope you're having a wonderful weekend.

(b) (6)

I'll give him a heads up that u likely to get response by tomorrow

May 28

5/28 8:46 AM

Hi Sunshine. Granite is on an internal call. Hopefully I'll get first contact with (b) (6) their comms person, shortly. Want in on that? Comms to comms?

Christian, Peter A 5/28 8:54 AM



Sure. I go into our LT meeting at 9, but will look out for the call.

Christian, Peter A 5/28 1:31 PM



[1:27 PM] (b) (6) (FHWA)

Proposed FHWA Statement:

The Federal Highway Administration is currently administering the contract for ongoing work at Denali National Park to ensure visitors will be able to safely access the park via a new bridge spanning the Pretty Rocks Landslide. FHWA fully supports the display of American flags. In this instance, we received visitor complaints about flags creating a noise disturbance at the park for wildlife and visitors while vehicles were in motion. We have worked with the contractor to ensure American flags are displayed while stationary as part of our ongoing partnership with project partners to keep a low profile in the park during ongoing construction.

Additional Background:

Please see NPS statement here: <https://www.nps.gov/dena/learn/news/national-park-service-statement-may-26-2024.htm>

National Park Service Statement - Denali National Park & Preserve (U.S. National Park Service)

Merrell, Brooke added (b) (6) and (b) (6) to the chat.

5/25 11:25 AM

Hi gang. (b) (6) says that flag comment volume is overwhelming. Give a call if you have a moment.

(b) (6) (b) (6) 5/25 12:54 PM

Hi Brooke, we are tasking out the comments and doing best we can at the moment.

Correction, tasking out filtering emails for threats. I am doing my best at social media comment filtering with help from a few others but mostly focusing on phone voicemails and emails

5/25 1:12 PM

Can we freeze commenting? Anyway- thank the team for me. We are working at the national level to diffuse.

(b) (6) (b) (6) 5/25 1:12 PM

No commenting!

Sorry, to clarify, you want us to stop people having the ability to comment on the posts?

I can check in on that

5/25 1:13 PM

Would that help?

(b) (6) (b) (6) 5/25 1:14 PM

I am of 2 minds. It stops the comments but fuels the rage

We are not commenting on the social media posts and just monitoring

Mostly they are just anger or confusion but not threatening

5/25 1:15 PM

You're the pro. I did tell (b) (6) that this is a time to bend rules if it helps.

(b) (6) (b) (6) 5/25 1:16 PM

What does Pete C say on something like this? He has more experience than I in dealing with this sort of situation

(b) (6) 5/25 1:16 PM

What does Pete C say on something like this? He has more experience than I in dealing with this sort of situation

5/25 1:21 PM

He's flying around right now, I'll ask him as soon as he lands!

(b) (6) 5/25 1:26 PM

No worries!

Both (b) (6) and I feel that keeping social media open for comments is best option for now



Until or if they become threatening

I'll keep on comments for a while. I have access

We are ceasing from posting anything new

5/25 1:34 PM

I'm grateful, thanks (b) (6)



(b) (6) 5/26 12:09 PM



Do you want any lead in text to the statement like the "Solo Climber...." post (below)? This is how it is appearing on the listing element.


Chiron along the Edge of the Glacier Trail in 2002 in Kenai Fjords National Park.
NPS/Steve Gaskline

Showing 1 - 13 of 133 Show 13 Columns Sort By Date Released

DENALI NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE
National Park Service Statement

National Park Service Statement **Date Released:** 2024-05-26

DENALI NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE
Solo Climber Who Died in Fall on Denali Identified



Denali National Park and Preserve mountaineering rangers recovered the body of a deceased solo climber at 17,000 feet on Denali's West Buttress route the evening of Monday, May 26. The climber has been identified as T. Hagiwara, from Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan. **Date Released:** 2024-05-21

WRIANGELL - ST. ELIAS NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE
Kennicott Glacier Aircraft-borne Ice-Penetrating Radar Surveys

Christian, Peter A 5/26 12:10 PM



(b) (6) I believe Brooke wanted the title to read exactly like that. Thanks.



5/26 12:12 PM


I did, but now that the statement doesn't follow, that may not be the best way. "Flags in Parks"?

(b) (6) 5/26 12:14 PM

Lead in text could be a short excerpt from the statement like:
Reports that a National Park Service (NPS) official ordered the removal of an American flag from a Denali bridge construction worker's vehicle at Denali National Park are false.

(b) (6) 5/26 12:14 PM

Just for awareness: the Alert that links to the statement currently looks like this in case it needs to be updated as well to be more specific

 **National Park Service Statement**
The National Park Service has issued a statement.

Christian, Peter A 5/26 12:16 PM



Brooke, its your call on how you want the statement title to read on your website. Short and descriptive.



5/26 12:21 PM

Yeah I'll go with whatever (b) (6) says 😊

(b) (6) 5/26 12:22 PM

😊 I agree with (b) (6) we usually include a short statement. I can go ahead a quickly update them



(b) (6) 5/26 12:29 PM

Both have been updated to include the descriptive sentence "Reports that a National Park Service (NPS) official ordered the removal of an American flag from a Denali bridge construction worker's vehicle at Denali National Park are false." Thanks



(b) (6) 5/26 12:31 PM Edited

Awesome, the intro statement will help contextualize the messaging.

May 25

5/25 10:07 AM

Hi (b) (6) was it you who texted my work phone? I'm screening, obviously. Available to talk convoy.

(b) (6) 5/25 10:09 AM

Yes that was me. Let's chat.

5/25 11:26 AM

I'm reaching out to (b) (6) and (b) (6) We need them to feel free to let voicemail take over, even if we miss some non-flag calls. Email, too.

(b) (6) 5/25 11:30 AM

Copy we have a plan in place with someone dedicated to the line who is comfortable reviewing the messages. I've briefed (b) (6) and she is making sure we have the appropriate staff to cover VC operations. I agree though if we keep getting over run we will need to scale back our reviewing.

On another topic we might have a motorcycle rally coming as well separate from the rally coming tomorrow from Walmart. Still working to get more info.

5/25 12:37 PM

<https://mustreadalaska.com/alaskans-with-trucks-cars-and-flags-flying-high-are-organizing-a-convoy-to-denali-national-park-entrance/>

Alaskans with trucks, cars, and flags flying ... ✕

Alaskans offended by the Denali National Park Superintendent who banned the American flag from a...

mustreadalaska.com

Close hold- the director will be calling Sullivan shortly. I expect he will say the contractor can fly the flag. (just FYI- that's fine, certainly not a mountain to die on). I just talked with Granite leadership, confirmed that NO NPS employee made an order to remove flags, and that Granite has an internal policy against this kind of sign. We will work on either a joint press release or an NPS press release with Granite quotes, goal of releasing today.

(b) (6) 5/25 12:47 PM

Copy

5/26 11:12 AM

(b) (6) - an NPS statement is being released over the next 20 minutes:

Reports that a National Park Service (NPS) official ordered the removal of an American flag from a Denali bridge construction worker's vehicle at Denali National Park are false. At no time did an NPS official seek to ban the American flag from the project site or associated vehicles. The NPS neither administers the bridge project contract, nor has the authority to enforce terms or policies related to the contract or contractors performing the work. The American flag can be seen at various locations within Denali National Park – at park facilities and campsites, on public and private vehicles, and at employee residences – and we welcome its display this Memorial Day weekend and every day.

On social media and on our website.

(b) (6) 5/26 11:25 AM

Thanks

Re: [EXTERNAL] Flag Issue

Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sat 5/25/2024 1:13 PM

To: (b) (6)

Thanks for the update, I'll adjust expectations.

From: (b) (6)**Sent:** Saturday, May 25, 2024 1:11 PM**To:** Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Flag Issue

This email has been received from outside of DOI - Use caution before clicking on links, opening attachments, or responding.

Brooke,

We are working through things on our end, but I'm not sure we are going to be able to get things together until Tuesday. We support the Park in making a statement, but at this time we may not be able to get our people together this weekend to provide a statement.

(b) (6)

Re: Flags at Denali National Park

Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sat 5/25/2024 7:38 PM

To (b) (6)

Means a lot, (b) (6) thank you.

From: (b) (6)

Sent: Saturday, May 25, 2024 7:32 PM

To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Subject: RE: Flags at Denali National Park

Hey Brooke,

Just wanted to drop you a note and let you know I'm thinking about you, and you have my support. What a messed up situation. .

Be well, and be safe.

(b) (6)

#istandwithbrooke

From: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sent: Friday, May 24, 2024 2:39 PM

To: NPS DENA ALL Employees <DENA_ALL_Employees@nps.gov>

Subject: Flags at Denali National Park

Team Denali,

This Memorial Day weekend, we have some interesting inquiries regarding the American flag coming in. Last night a local blogger made a post about Denali that is being interpreted as that the park has banned flags. As you know, flags are not banned in the park. Flags are flown at Denali facilities and can be found on public and employee private vehicles, at campsites, and at homes in the park. Here's what I know about this latest line of questions:

Last week a visitor complaint was forwarded to the Federal Highways contracting officer regarding a large flag flapping on a contractor vehicle. The contracting officer correctly told the employee that, with bus traffic starting on Monday, the park manages administrative traffic on the restricted portion of the road to minimize visual disturbances to offer park visitors wildlife viewing in a wilderness landscape.

By the time I came up to speed on this interaction, Granite leadership already weighed in reaffirming their commitment to keep a low-profile during visitation season. They have been a very good partner in minimizing impact of a large construction project to the park and the community.

The individual has reached out to at least one local outlet to express frustration with this instruction. Today, frontline staff have been fielding calls responding to the story. If you are fielding questions, your supervisor or team lead has some language that can be used with visitors asking about the issue. Those wanting to lodge a complaint or ask questions can fill out a comment card or be pointed to the superintendent's email address.

If you have questions about the Denali Vehicle Management Plan or how we manage administrative traffic on the restricted portion of the road, please reach out through your supervisor or team lead, or to myself. The concern being addressed was not the display of the American flag, rather impacts of a large flag on a truck to the landscape and potentially to roadside wildlife.

I'll take advantage of this all-employee email to express my gratitude for this great country, and for the generations of Americans who laid down their lives to protect American values. Memorial Day at Denali can be hectic- the kick-off of a busy summer. I encourage us each to find time to reflect on the sacrifices made so that we can live how and where we do.

Honestly, it is with heavy heart that I contemplate this Memorial Day knowing that there are those this weekend who feel that I and the NPS have disrespected the flag by how we manage the Park Road. Know that I have a deep love for our nation and for the flag, and the rights for all Americans that it represents. And I inspirational patriotism in the dedication this staff takes to care for these public lands every day.

Sincerely, Brooke

Re: (b) (6) follow up on constituent comment

(b) (6)

Fri 5/24/2024 11:02 AM

To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>; NPS DENA Management Team <DENA_Management_Team@nps.gov>

Cc: (b) (6)

Team,

If your staff receives any complaints on this issue in person please have them acknowledge the complainant and offer a comment card or advise them they can email the park their complaint. If the complainant becomes aggressive or makes threats please disengage and contact ARCC right away and law enforcement will respond.

Staff that manage our info line and other avenues that we receive complaints through have been briefed. This message is more a general awareness that staff do not need to be subject to abuse and to please call ARCC immediately if they need assistance.

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sent: Friday, May 24, 2024 9:50:05 AM

To: NPS DENA Management Team <DENA_Management_Team@nps.gov>

Cc: (b) (6)

Subject: Fw: (b) (6) follow up on constituent comment

Hi team,

Many of you know by now that a blog entry in the (b) (6) is generating some very negative comments on the info line and via email. This issue came in last week as a congressional inquiry from (b) (6)'s office. Below are the talking points I used in responding to that staff. We'll pull together something shorter. Given the source, the current plan is to not respond publicly. However, that may change quickly if this gets picked up by a legitimate news source. Stand by, and thanks for being available to help. We can communicate in this thread if needed, and (b) (6) can quickly feed me information in Talkeetna if needed.

From: Merrell, Brooke

Sent: Friday, May 17, 2024 3:20 PM

To: Alberg, David W <david_alberg@nps.gov>; Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>

Subject: re: (b) (6) follow up on constituent comment

Good afternoon,

Thank you for your inquiry regarding a constituent comment from a contractor working in Denali National Park who was told by a Federal Highways contracting officer to remove a large flag affixed to a work truck as it was counter to National Park Service practice. While I did not directly know about this instance, it is true that on the restricted portion of the Denali Park Road we manage to minimize visual disturbance on the landscape to allow for visitor experience.

The Denali Park Road is an early success story of managed access to allow for maximum visitation. Since 1972, visitors transfer to bus to travel into the heart of 6 million acres of largely untouched Alaska landscape. The bus operation allows half a million visitors a year to visit Alaskan wilderness while avoiding the overcrowded experience often found in other parks with high visitation. Only park buses, inholder vehicles, and administrative traffic are allowed past mile 15 of the 92 mile road. The park manages to achieve standards that include how much traffic any given vehicle encounters, where vehicles stop within key iconic viewsheds, and vehicle impacts to the wildlife that are a major draw to visitors. The NPS works with inholders and concessionaires to ensure that vehicles on this portion of the road are neutral colors that blend with the landscape. In addition, visitors are instructed to keep hands, cameras, etc. inside vehicles to avoid unfamiliar stimulus that could drive wildlife away from the road corridor, further interrupting the visitor experience.

With visitors currently driving to mile 30 of the Park Road and soon visiting to bus along the length of the road, a flag becomes a visual impact to the natural landscape and a potential deterrent to roadside wildlife viewing. The request to the driver of this truck was in response to a complaint by a visitor.

The contractor employing the constituent in question here is working on the high-profile Pretty Rocks Bridge project. The contractor has been an excellent partner in ensuring the best possible visitor experience even as this large construction project is accomplished. Contractor traffic is considered administrative traffic along the restricted portion of the road, and the contractor has been amenable to conforming to NPS administrative traffic practices. I am certain that we can work together to address this employee's concerns.

I understand and support this person's right to being able to display the flag on roadways accessible to the public. However, the visual and potential wildlife impacts by an administrative vehicle is counter to the successful management plans and goals of the restricted road. I'm happy to discuss this further, and will follow up with the contractor.

Sincerely,
Brooke Merrell

Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: (b) (6) Denali NPS constituent question

Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>

Mon 5/20/2024 4:24 PM

To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>; Alberg, David W <david_alberg@nps.gov>; (b) (6)

Thanks for taking it on as I knew you were busy on the fatality. If (b) (6) reconnects with you, just let me know. Glad your conversation went well!

From: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sent: Monday, May 20, 2024 4:15 PM

To: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>; Alberg, David W <david_alberg@nps.gov>; (b) (6)

Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: (b) (6) Denali NPS constituent question

Had a good chat with (b) (6) She'll call back if she needs more. Thanks for making the connection, Pete. She expressed that she appreciates you and Dave.

I'll work on getting the field crew from the contractor more context on the change from shoulder to high visitation season.

From: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sent: Monday, May 20, 2024 3:44 PM

To: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>; Alberg, David W <david_alberg@nps.gov>

Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: (b) (6) Denali NPS constituent question

Hey Pete, I'm happy to go direct, do you recommend a cold call following your email?

Regarding your question- per Granite's general understanding of the importance of maintaining a low profile during the high visitation season that starts today. As demonstrated by moving to driving at night, carpooling, etc. I think both NPS and Granite just did not foresee this particular instance to get it in the contract.

So I'm good to call? Thanks for your help today.

From: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>

Sent: Monday, May 20, 2024 3:25 PM

To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>; Alberg, David W <david_alberg@nps.gov>

Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: (b) (6) Denali NPS constituent question

Brooke, do you wish to go direct with (b) (6) or I'm fine connecting with her but I'm still not clear how the email chain below answers the constituent's inquiry. Is Granite enforcing this "low profile" commitment at the behest of the park or because of the Vehicle Management Plan?

From: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sent: Monday, May 20, 2024 1:54 PM

To: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>; Alberg, David W <david_alberg@nps.gov>
Subject: Fw: [EXTERNAL] RE: (b) (6) Denali NPS constituent question

Please see chain on FHWA discussion with Granite. Already taken care of on their end, with acknowledged commitment.

From: (b) (6)
Sent: Monday, May 20, 2024 1:44 PM
To: (b) (6); Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>; (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: (b) (6) Denali NPS constituent question

This email has been received from outside of DOI - Use caution before clicking on links, opening attachments, or responding.

Good Afternoon,

I just spoke with (b) (6) of Granite. He told me the flying of the flags doesn't fit Granite's commitment to keep a low profile while in the Park. He will be addressing the flags with his staff and subcontractors.

(b) (6)
[Redacted]

[Redacted]

From: (b) (6)
Sent: Friday, May 17, 2024 1:00 PM
To: (b) (6)
Subject: FW: (b) (6) Denali NPS constituent question

FYI. I observed multiple vehicles w/ large 3'x4' US flag on back of trucks and/or equipment while on site Tuesday. Did not observe this last year.

From: (b) (6)
Sent: Friday, May 17, 2024 12:26 PM
To: (b) (6)
Cc: (b) (6)
Subject: FW: (b) (6) Denali NPS constituent question

Hi (b) (6)

Forwarding this email chain as an FYI.

Thanks,
(b) (6)

From: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>
Sent: Friday, May 17, 2024 12:22 PM
To: (b) (6)
Cc: (b) (6)
Subject: Fw: (b) (6) Denali NPS constituent question

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Department of Transportation (DOT). Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi all- we got a congressional inquiry, so I'm shot-gunning this one for a quick response.

1. anyone have additional information on this exchange?
2. do we have a contract provision or administrative vehicle use policy provision that would directly address the request?

Thanks for your help on this, Brooke

From: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>
Sent: Friday, May 17, 2024 11:14 AM
To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>
Subject: (b) (6) Denali NPS constituent question

Hi Brooke. Can you provide me with the details so that I can respond to (b) (6) inquiry? Thanks.

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: (b) (6)
Sent: Friday, May 17, 2024 12:37 PM
To: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Denali NPS constituent question

This email has been received from outside of DOI - Use caution before clicking on links, opening attachments, or responding.

Hello Pete:

I hope this note finds you well. We are playing phone tag so I am following up with an email as well.

We received a call yesterday afternoon from one of the contractors working on the Denali Road project. He shared that he was informed that they (contractors) were not allowed to fly an American flag on their vehicle(s) while in the park. He shared that the federal highways project manager is the one who told him, but that the directive came from the park. When he asked what the reason was, he was told because it "did not fit with the park experience."

Is there any additional information you can provide for me regarding the regulation that would prohibit a vehicle from flying a flag? He described it as a 3'x4' flag attached to PVC pipe that was attached to the outside of the vehicle. I do not know if it was a single vehicle or multiple. He was quite upset, however. I would appreciate any information you can provide. Thanks so much.

(b) (6)

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Re: (b) (6) Denali NPS constituent question

(b) (6)

Fri 5/17/2024 11:59 AM

To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov> (b) (6)

Cc: (b) (6)

On Wednesday, I received a visitor comment about the flag on the Granite vehicle, which I passed along to (b) (6) (see email pasted below). It is unfortunate that it was conveyed to the driver that he "was not allowed to fly a flag" and that American flags "do not fit with the park experience"; that was not my intention. I had hoped that it could be addressed with more nuance and sensitivity. If I have misstepped, I apologize. This might be one of those hard lessons to learn.

(b) (6)

From: (b) (6)

Sent: Thursday, May 16, 2024 11:56 AM

To: (b) (6)

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Granite trucks

This email has been received from outside of DOI - Use caution before clicking on links, opening attachments, or responding.

Thanks for the observations (b) (6) I figured the flag would get some comments and have mentioned it to Granite. I will explain a little more clearly this afternoon.

The traffic volume has been a burr under my saddle. As you said, there wasn't anything definitive put into the SCRs so I'm lacking some ammunition to force car pooling except the threat of how it will effect their CPARS evaluation. (probably better than having something in the SCRs though). I will have the discussion with (b) (6) this afternoon about that as well.

I will let you know how it goes.

(b) (6)

From: (b) (6)

Sent: Thursday, May 16, 2024 11:28 AM

To: (b) (6)

Subject: Granite trucks

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Department of Transportation (DOT). Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

(b) (6)

I received a visitor complaint about a pick-up truck (assumed to be Granite) driving on the park road yesterday, west of Tek, with a "very large and obnoxious American flag attached to the vehicle and flapping in the wind". I acknowledge that there's nothing inherently offensive about an American flag, but perhaps it's not befitting of the NPS preference to make traffic as discreet as possible for wildlife and visitor experience. Tour and Transit buses will be driving out to East Fork starting on Monday - is there an appropriate way to request that Granite take it down?

Also, in general, there seems to be a lot of contractor traffic going back and forth on the road during the day, mostly pickup trucks with a single occupant. What happened to the intention to carpool to the work site? I don't think anything specific was ever included in the SCRs but is there some way to encourage an effort to minimize the traffic on the road, particularly May 20th-Sept 12th, when the Vehicle Management Plan thresholds will be measured? Of course, I don't want to cause any schedule delays or incur any financial consequences, and I am not speaking on behalf of park managers. I'm just trying to help us follow through on the commitments we made to the public during the planning and compliance process.

Thanks for considering,

(b) (6)
[Redacted signature block]

Follow up on Denali discussion

Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sat 5/25/2024 7:48 AM

To (b) (6)

Hi (b) (6)

Thanks again for the discussion last night. I said I'd pass along the language we are using to respond to calls asking about flags in Denali. Here is what front-line staff were given yesterday to help field those calls:

Visitors to Denali National Park and Preserve can fly flags, there are no restrictions on flags in the park. The NPS flies flags at many of our facilities in the park.

On the restricted portion of the Denali Park Road (mile 15-92) we manage vehicles to minimize visual disturbances to offer park visitors wildlife viewing in an exceptional wilderness landscape. On this road section administrative traffic, including the bus transportation system, is managed to be as unobtrusive as possible from the quantity of vehicles to their natural paint colors.

Also, I reread the blog post last night after we spoke. The in the blog post, the contractor referenced flags at the construction site, which is past the portion of the road where visitor buses and administrative overlap. I will clarify with Federal Highways that the administrative traffic practices related to visitors on buses are only of concern when and where buses are present. The construction site is not impacted.

I'm working to set up a meeting with FHWA and Granite to see if I can find out anything else about the communication on flags this week. It's proving tough to reach the relevant parties on the holiday weekend.

I'm around this weekend if we need to touch base again.

Thanks, Brooke

Fw: From DENA Info Line voicemail (b) (6)

Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Tue 5/28/2024 7:25 AM

To: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>

Followed up on both of these on Sunday, both supportive.

From: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sent: Sunday, May 26, 2024 6:21 PM

To: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>; (b) (6)

Subject: Re: From DENA Info Line voicemail - (b) (6)

Thanks, I texted them. I'll chat with (b) (6) tomorrow.

[Get Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>

Sent: Sunday, May 26, 2024 6:20:02 PM

To: (b) (6) Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Subject: Re: From DENA Info Line voicemail - (b) (6)

Brooke, since these two fellas are not a part of our CODEL and they aren't national media, it's your call as to whether you want to talk to them by phone.

[Get Outlook for iOS](#)

From: (b) (6)

Sent: Sunday, May 26, 2024 4:08 PM

To: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>; Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Subject: From DENA Info Line voicemail - (b) (6)

Passing on that (b) (6) left a voicemail on DENA's info line yesterday afternoon; he was concerned about the "flag controversy" and asked to reach someone in communications office. His message was polite and supportive. He left (b) (6) as callback #.

Apologies that we didn't notice this earlier - as you can appreciate, we're shuffling through a big pile of voicemails that continues to grow.

Thanks to you both for all you're doing this weekend.

(b) (6)

Merrell, Brooke shared "Denali Contractor Flag briefing statemen" with you

Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>


Sat 5/25/2024 4:14 PM

To:Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>;Creachbaum, Sarah S <Sarah_Creachbaum@nps.gov> (b) (6)




Merrell, Brooke invited you to access a file

Here's the document that Merrell, Brooke shared with you.

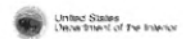


Denali Contractor Flag briefing statemen

 This invite will only work for you and people with existing access.

Open

Share



[Privacy Statement](#)

RE: [EXTERNAL] Re: One more proposal for you

(b) (6) >

Wed 5/29/2024 2:00 PM

To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov> (b) (6)

I can do a call!

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

From: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, May 29, 2024 2:54 PM
To: (b) (6)
Cc: (b) (6)
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: One more proposal for you

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Department of Transportation (DOT). Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I can't seem to call you.

From: (b) (6)
Sent: Wednesday, May 29, 2024 1:51 PM
To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>
Cc: (b) (6) >
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: One more proposal for you

Sure does
Sent from my iPhone

On May 29, 2024, at 2:51 PM, Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov> wrote:

CAUTION: External Email: Be Cyber-Alert

Okay by me. (b) (6) you up for a 5 minute call? (b) (6) does teams work for you?

From: (b) (6)
Sent: Wednesday, May 29, 2024 1:48 PM
To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Cc: (b) (6)
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: One more proposal for you

I'm open now but sitting in (b) (6)
Sent from my iPhone

On May 29, 2024, at 2:38 PM, Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov> wrote:

CAUTION: External Email: Be Cyber-Alert

(b) (6)

From what I'm seeing, we should jump on a call as soon as we can. I have a call at 2 I can't miss. Can we meet at any other time, the sooner the better? I can do the next 20 minutes if that helps. (b) (6) I've had recent communication with (b) (6) as well if you want to include him.

Thanks, Brooke

From: (b) (6) >
Sent: Tuesday, May 28, 2024 7:47 AM
To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>
Cc: (b) (6)
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: One more proposal for you

Hi Brooke,

We have a call in a few minutes and (b) (6) will be on it. We can address both her getting back to you and can ask how to respond to contractor questions. Will share the results as soon as possible. So sorry to hear about all the disaster this has become and the personal threats. Hope that all quiets down and you can return home soon.

(b) (6)

From: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, May 28, 2024 8:38 AM
To: (b) (6)
Cc: (b) (6)
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: One more proposal for you

CAUTION: External Email: Be Cyber-Alert

Good morning all-

Reporting out from a long weekend. As of yesterday morning, staff was fielding around 4000 emails and 400 calls on the info line. That is slowing down considerably. The blog story seems to be making rounds on other local blogs in the lower 48, making control difficult. Parks across the

country are starting to field calls. (b) (6)

We haven't moved past the clear statement below, as anything more would be speculative on my part. A contractor statement will go far at this point. Happy to jump on a call to touch base.

I haven't heard from (b) (6) yet. Is there a specific place we can point people to who have contacted us with questions better answered by Granite?

Thanks, this won't last forever.

Brooke

From: (b) (6)
Sent: Sunday, May 26, 2024 1:50 PM
To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>
Cc: (b) (6)
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: One more proposal for you

I like it. Hope today is as uneventful as it can be for you and the park.

National news has picked up the story now - first article in the Fox News app feed.

Sent from my iPhone

On May 26, 2024, at 1:30 PM, Merrell, Brooke
<brooke_merrell@nps.gov> wrote:

CAUTION: External Email: Be Cyber-Alert

All, we got through our national process and the NPS has released the following statement:

Reports that a National Park Service (NPS) official ordered the removal of an American flag from a Denali bridge construction worker's vehicle at Denali National Park are false. At no time did an NPS official seek to ban the American flag from the project site or associated vehicles. The NPS neither administers the bridge project contract, nor has the authority to enforce terms or policies related to the contract or contractors performing the work. The American flag can be seen at various locations within Denali National Park – at park facilities and campsites, on public and private vehicles, and at employee residences – and we welcome its display this Memorial Day weekend and every day.

I'll probably push media until after the weekend.

Thanks, Brooke

From: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sent: Saturday, May 25, 2024 6:38 PM

To: (b) (6)

Cc: (b) (6)

Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: One more proposal for you

Thanks, very timely.

I'll skip the Granite policy talking point. I'll just say that flags at the bridge site or on equipment at the bridge site would stir very few pots.

Take care all.

From: (b) (6) >

Sent: Saturday, May 25, 2024 6:24 PM

To: (b) (6)

Cc: (b) (6)

Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: One more proposal for you

If you haven't heard back from (b) (6) in time for your media requests, my comments are below in red. (b) (6) will be the primary point of contact for media questions and has access to company leadership for approvals.

From: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sent: Saturday, May 25, 2024 5:24 PM

To: (b) (6)

Cc: (b) (6)

Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: One more proposal for you

CAUTION: External Email: Be Cyber-Alert

Understood, (b) (6) I'm likely to start taking media requests soon- so far Alaska venues.

My talking points are:

No NPS staff ordered the removal of flags from contractor vehicles. My understanding, based on conversations over the past several days, NPS **did not** order flag removal. NPS advised the FHWA of complaints about the flags, FHWA advised our manager and our manager asked the workers to remove the flags.

Flags are not banned in Denali National Park

Denali manages the restricted portion of the road to minimize impacts to view shed and wildlife, and Granite had been an excellent partner in meeting that. We appreciate the positive remarks, but would you be opposed to using "the Contractor" in lieu of Granite? Speaking for the regional team, we understand the Park's objective to provide unimpeded views of the natural environment and will do our part to uphold that objective by keeping a low profile and preventing unnecessary distraction- especially in the public areas. We are more aware of how sensitive this can be now.

My understanding is that Granite has an internal policy that covers what can be on company vehicles. Not sure this will help a whole lot. Our vehicle policy prohibits modifications or advertising on vehicles without company approval. Here's the most pertinent provision in the policy: 3.5 *Advertising – No advertising matter or stickers are to be displayed on Company vehicles unless approved in advance by the Company. (e.g. Political bumper stickers, sports team's logos, college logos, etc.*

Let me know if this causes heartburn. I'll be deferring to Granite a bunch, I expect.

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: (b) (6) >
Sent: Saturday, May 25, 2024 4:16:51 PM
To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>; (b) (6)
(b) (6)
Cc: (b) (6)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: One more proposal for you

This email has been received from outside of DOI - Use caution before clicking on links, opening attachments, or responding.

Hello Brooke,

We absolutely take this seriously and wish the escalation could be diffused quickly for everyone's benefit, especially for you and your staff. As for an immediate message, we have to wait for approval from the company leadership which won't be in time for tomorrow.

We're also investigating the chain of events leading to this situation so we can take appropriate measures and be accurate and clear in any prepared statements. As we've done before, any press release Granite prepares regarding the project or the Park will be run through the proper channels for FHWA and NPS approval.

(b) (6)

From: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sent: Saturday, May 25, 2024 2:08 PM

To: (b) (6)

Cc: (b) (6)

Subject: One more proposal for you

CAUTION: External Email: Be Cyber-Alert

Sorry to interrupt again, but in talking up the chain came up with an idea to pitch to you while I wait for (b) (6)

Best case scenario would be to get a statement out today, before tomorrow's planned festivities. If you are able to move fast and are willing, a Granite-only statement might be best for us.

The points that would really help us out are:

- No NPS employee requested that Granite employees remove flags
- There is/was no NPS ban on Granite flying flags

Hopeful this might work for you. I'll wait to hear from (b) (6)

Thanks again, Brooke

Re: Priority Letter addressing flag

(b) (6) >

Sun 5/26/2024 1:19 PM

To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

One of your (b) (6) is working to help defuse. More off line once you weather this.

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sent: Sunday, May 26, 2024 1:15:54 PM

To: (b) (6)

Subject: Re: Priority- Letter addressing flag

Good thinking (b) (6) But how did you see that!

From: (b) (6)

Sent: Sunday, May 26, 2024 12:50 PM

To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Subject: Priority- Letter addressing flag

Brooke, would you consider releasing to the ALC the letter that you sent to the (b) (6). I think the ALC can be advocates for your messaging.

Hopefully (b) (6) office has been receptive to your corrections.

Good luck and please feel free to reach out if you need anything.

(b) (6)

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

Re: Fw: [EXTERNAL] question from (b) (6)

(b) (6)

Sat 5/25/2024 5:26 PM

To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Thanks Brooke. Crazy times! (b) (6)

On Sat, May 25, 2024 at 4:34 PM Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov> wrote:

Hi (b) (6)

I'll each out as soon as I can on this.

Happy Memorial Day,

Brooke

From: (b) (6)

Sent: Saturday, May 25, 2024 2:51 PM

To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Subject: Fw: [EXTERNAL] question from (b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

From: (b) (6)

Sent: Saturday, May 25, 2024 2:26 PM

To: (b) (6)

Subject: [EXTERNAL] question from (b) (6)

This email has been received from outside of DOI - Use caution before clicking on links, opening attachments, or responding.

Hey (b) (6) .touching base on the flag debacle - are you aware? I would normally not pay attention to this, but (b) (6) has jumped on the bandwagon, so I have to ask about it... Just needing to know currently what is true and what is not. Hope you can get back to me. Thanks.

(b) (6)

Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: NPS inquiry

Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sun 5/26/2024 3:08 PM

To: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>

This looks okay to me. A Granite statement should s title the first paragraph. He's just restating that there's no law or policy banning the flag. We agree. We should look at (b) (6) questions in preparation for helping Chuck. But this looks like a good way for his office to conclude his issue.

Get Outlook for iOS

From: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>

Sent: Sunday, May 26, 2024 2:59:26 PM

To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Subject: Fw: [EXTERNAL] Re: NPS inquiry

I've suggested to Sarah to give (b) (6) a heads up.

From: (b) (6)

Sent: Sunday, May 26, 2024 2:41 PM

To: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>

Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: NPS inquiry

Peter: (b) (6) office just put this out. We'll have a story soon. Any additional comment from NPS in light on this? Thanks.

(b) (6) stands by his letter. There is no law or regulation that he could conceive of that prohibits the flying of the American flag in an American national park. The fact remains that one of his constituents called the senator's office because he was informed that he had to remove his 3 x 5 American flag after the National Park Service received a complaint about him flying the American flag on his truck.

In a conversation this morning between the senator and the National Park Service Director, the director committed to providing more details to respond to the questions in the senator's letter.

(b) (6) also strongly recommended to the director that any Alaskans heading to the park today should be allowed to fly their flags in a safe and honorable way without incident."

(b) (6) (b) (6)
[Redacted]



On Sun, May 26, 2024 at 1:38 PM Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov> wrote:
At no time did an NPS official seek to ban or limit the flag.

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: (b) (6)
Sent: Sunday, May 26, 2024 1:24 PM
To: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: NPS inquiry

Thanks - asking one more way just to be clear: Did the NPS attempt to limit the display of flags by workers or contractors in any way or at any location inside the park? Thanks,

On Sun, May 26, 2024 at 12:07 PM Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov> wrote:
Hi (b) (6) The senator's office received the same message that I sent to you. I can't begin to speculate on how such an unfortunate miscommunication occurred.

From: (b) (6)
Sent: Sunday, May 26, 2024 11:50 AM
To: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: NPS inquiry

This email has been received from outside of DOI - Use caution before clicking on links, opening attachments, or responding.

Thanks Peter. Two more questions:

Has the NPS responded to (b) (6) If so, can you pass along the response?

Is NPS aware of anything that could have led to the perception that the agency attempted to ban or affect display of flags with contractors?

Thanks.

On Sun, May 26, 2024 at 11:34 AM Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov> wrote:
Good morning, (b) (6) I have a statement for you. Attribution should be:

Peter Christian, NPS Alaska Spokesperson

Reports that a National Park Service (NPS) official ordered the removal of an American flag from a Denali bridge construction worker's vehicle at Denali National Park are false. At no time did an NPS official seek to ban the American flag from the project site or associated vehicles. The NPS neither administers the bridge project contract, nor has the authority to enforce terms or policies related to the contract or contractors performing the work. The American flag can be seen at various locations within Denali National Park – at park facilities and campsites, on public and private vehicles, and at employee residences – and we welcome its display this Memorial Day weekend and every day.

From: (b) (6)
Sent: Saturday, May 25, 2024 6:04 PM
To: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Fwd: NPS inquiry

Thanks.

On Sat, May 25, 2024 at 6:01 PM Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov> wrote:
Hi (b) (6) We hope to have a statement by tomorrow.

From: (b) (6)
Sent: Saturday, May 25, 2024 5:46 PM
To: (b) (6) Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fwd: NPS inquiry

This email has been received from outside of DOI - Use caution before clicking on links, opening attachments, or responding.

Hi - sending inquiry here given (b) (6) out-of-office response. Given (b) (6) statement and the various chatter, (b) (6) is making an inquiry into what happened and any updates. Thanks.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: (b) (6)
Date: Sat, May 25, 2024 at 5:39 PM
Subject: NPS inquiry
To: <(b) (6)>

(b) (6) What happened re the construction workers and the flag in Denali National Park and Preserve? Thanks.

(b) (6)

--

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

--

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

FW: URGENT Fw: [EXTERNAL] From NPS.gov: Resending Media Questions from (b) (6)

(b) (6)

Wed 5/22/2024 5:33 PM

To: (b) (6)

Cc: (b) (6)

FHWA Team,

Please be aware of the media inquiry we've received (below).

Looks like we may want to circle up to collectively discuss and jointly formulate a response. Probably be more to follow on this, but just wanted to make you aware.

(b) (6)

From: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sent: Wednesday, May 22, 2024 5:28 PM

To: (b) (6)

Subject: Fw: URGENT Fw: [EXTERNAL] From NPS.gov: Resending Media Questions from (b) (6)

(b) (6)

For your awareness. We should notify FHWA.

Thanks, Brooke

From: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>

Sent: Wednesday, May 22, 2024 1:07 PM

To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Cc: Alberg, David W <david_alberg@nps.gov>

Subject: URGENT Fw: [EXTERNAL] From NPS.gov: Resending Media Questions from (b) (6)

Brooke, we've had a request for comment on the flag issue from the editor of the (b) (6). He says he has a 2pm deadline today, which is not reasonable. If you would, please start working on the answers, as you would like this to read in a local newspaper and we will probably need to vet this up the chain. Copying Dave on this as well.

From: NPS News Media <NewsMedia@nps.gov>

Sent: Wednesday, May 22, 2024 12:37 PM

To: (b) (6); Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>

Subject: Fw: [EXTERNAL] From NPS.gov: Resending Media Questions from (b) (6)

Seems sensitive- I have not included DENA.

(b) (6)

National Park Service
Office of Public Affairs

From: (b) (6) v> on behalf of Ask NPS, NPS <AskNPS@nps.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, May 22, 2024 4:35 PM
To: NPS News Media <NewsMedia@nps.gov>
Cc: (b) (6) >
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] From NPS.gov: Resending Media Questions from (b) (6)

Hello,

This message is being forwarded to our news media department for a response.

Thank you.

Office of Communications
National Park Service

From: no-reply@nps.gov <no-reply@nps.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, May 22, 2024 2:06 PM
To: Ask NPS, NPS <AskNPS@nps.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] From NPS.gov: Resending Media Questions from (b) (6)

This email has been received from outside of DOI - Use caution before clicking on links, opening attachments, or responding.

Email submitted from: (b) (6) at /orgs/1207/contactus.htm

Use (b) (6) to reply to this message

Category: Information

I am working on an article about the construction crew out at Polychrome Pass. I was notified that Park Superintendent Brooke Merrell told the man in charge of Federal Highways oversight that the construction crew could no longer fly the American flag from their vehicles or equipment. I would like to get an explanation or rationale from the park about why that request was made. Below are five specific questions I'm hoping to get answered. My deadline is today (May 22) at 2 p.m. Please feel free to answer these questions via email or phone (b) (6). Thank you. (b) (6), (b) (6)

QUESTIONS: 1. Did Denali National Park Superintendent Brooke Merrell ask for the American flags to be removed from the construction vehicles and equipment that are being used in the Polychrome bridge construction project? 2. When was that request made? 3. Does the park allow American flags to be flown in other areas of the park? 4. Does the park have a policy against visitors flying the American flag on their vehicles when driving through the park? 5. Why does the park not want flags flown on the construction vehicles at the Polychrome construction site?

Re: Update on flag story

(b) (6)

Sat 5/25/2024 8:35 PM

To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Well said Brooke... Hang in there!

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

From: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sent: Saturday, May 25, 2024 7:35:58 PM

To: NPS DENA ALL Employees <DENA_ALL_Employees@nps.gov>

Subject: Update on flag story

Team Denali,

I hope you are having a good Memorial Day weekend. I want to update after an eventful day. The blog continued to be shared, generating a lot of attention.

Convoys opposing an "NPS ban" from Fairbanks and Wasilla are expected to arrive at the park around 2:00 or 2:30 tomorrow flying flags on their vehicles. Due to the additional visitation on top of an already busy day, and because some teams are already drawn down this weekend, we are managing the afternoon with an Incident Command System led by (b) (6). I'm incredibly grateful to those coming in to fill those positions.

Our frontline staff managed a Memorial Weekend Saturday while managing over 2000 emails and 130 calls. Again, I can't tell you how grateful I am to them.

National and regional leadership is following this closely. The director met with (b) (6) this afternoon. Sarah was online all day liaising and supporting, and getting update on staff- she's thinking of us all.

Granite leadership, FHWA, and I were finally able to circle up and fill some of the gaps in our understanding of why the individual involved thought NPS ordered him to stop flying the flag. I think the timing of moving from shoulder to peak season and the challenging nature of communication involved in this contract and in remote areas were elements in this misunderstanding.

We clarified that no NPS employee ordered Granite to stop flying a flag. There is no NPS ban on flags in Denali. And Granite continues to demonstrate an understanding of how we manage the restricted portion of the road to benefit visitor experience.

We are pushing hard to be able to talk to several local media outlets who reached out later today. If successful, that may change the tenor of the interactions we are having.

People who are responding to the blog post range from curious to vitriolic. I'm proud of how staff is handling all reactions to this issue. We Americans all have strong feelings about our flag, and they are all on display this week. Concentrate on the good, thank you for working through this, we'll be on the other side soon.

Best, Brooke

update

Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sat 5/25/2024 5:02 PM

To: NPS DENA Management Team <DENA_Management_Team@nps.gov>

Cc: (b) (6)

Team- I genuinely hope that you have been doing Memorial weekend stuff rather than watch this flag story unfold. Here's a quick update, with more to come in an all employee email soon.

Things clearly escalated quickly over the last 24 hours, after the (b) (6) blog was shared. The front line has been swamped with calls and emails, and has been doing a valient job of keeping up with normal visitation.

(b) (6) is working with LE region wide to bring in some help while our LE is short staffed and exhausted after dealing with a series of night call-outs. For local ops while at least two convoys protesting the "banning" head this way, we are moving to ICS with (b) (6) leading.

At this point, the director has spoken with (b) (6) I am in close contact with their staff. I have confirmed with Granite and FHWA that no NPS employee has ordered Granite to remove the flags. My understanding is that Granite has a company policy that may cover what can be displayed on a company vehicle.

More soon, thank for the continued support and ideas.

Brooke

DRAFT NPS Briefing Statement date? 2024

Unit: Denali National Park and Preserve

Members: Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-AK), Rep. Mary Peltola (D-AK-AL)

Issue: Flags on contractor trucks

Key Points

- A construction contract employee is complaining to Senator Sullivan and through a local blog that NPS ordered that he take down a large American flag that was affixed to his work truck.
- The blog has spread quickly through conservative social media, and the park and Senator Sullivan's office have been fielding many calls regarding banned flags.
- Convoys of vehicles with flags are planning to drive from Fairbanks and from Wasilla to Denali on Sunday 5/25 to protest the "banning of the flag".
- On May 25, the NPS confirmed with FHWA and with Granite Inc that no NPS employee ordered the flags removed. A visitor complaint regarding the flag was forwarded from a Denali staff member to FHWA prior to the first communication on this matter.
- Director Sams also spoke with Senator Sullivan on Saturday, May 25.

Background

- On Friday, May 17, a staffer from Senator Sullivan's office contacted the Alaska Regional Office to inquire into a constituent complaint that the NPS had ordered them, a Granite Inc employee working on the Pretty Rocks Bridge Project at mile 45 of the Denali Park Road, to remove large flags from his truck when he was in the park.
- Upon looking into the complaint, Superintendent Brooke Merrell learned that staff had forwarded a visitor complaint regarding the flag to the Federal Highways (FHWA) COR for the project with a reminder that bus traffic on the restricted portion of the road would start on Monday, May 20. The superintendent shared that information with the staffer.
- Federal Highways is the contracting entity for the Pretty Rocks Bridge contract. Any NPS communication on the work covered by the contract is sent from NPS to FHWA.
- On Thursday, May 23, the Alaska Watchman, a local blog, posted a story featuring the Granite employee and stated that the superintendent had ordered Granite employees to remove three large flags, two on trucks.
- The employee blamed the superintendent for being a "liberal" and the author pointed out the national NPS LGBTQ+ page.
- The blog was shared broadly, and since then the park has received over 800 calls and emails. The region and other Alaska parks are also receiving calls.
- The Pretty Rocks Bridge, scheduled for completion in 2026, will restore full access to the west end of the road in 2027.

Current Status

- The park is preparing for the convoys by moving into an incident command team and bringing in additional law enforcement for a low-visibility presence.
- The superintendent will start responding to local media requests
- The park front line continues to be overwhelmed by calls and emails

Contact: Brooke Merrell, Superintendent, Denali National Park and Preserve

Updated: May 25, 2024

Re: Denali flag

(b) (6) >

Sun 5/26/2024 9:01 PM

To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Yikes Brooke - do you really have convoys coming your way? I had only heard a teeny bit about the flag story and didn't know it had snowballed. We have your back. Please let us know if (b) (6) can help in any way. (b) (6)

(b) (6)

Dena'inaq e'nen'aaq' gheshtnu ch'q'u yeshdu. (Dena'ina)*I live and work on Dena'ina land. (English)*

From: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>**Sent:** Sunday, May 26, 2024 1:36 PM**To:** NPS AKR ALC <AKR_ALC@nps.gov>**Subject:** Denali flag

Hello ALC,

(b) (6) gets credit for reminding me that this team is seeing the flag dust up in the news. You may end up fielding questions about flags in parks. In the interest of time, I'm cutting and pasting an email response to an (b) (6) inquiry. Let me know if I can help with responses. Thanks to those who sent help for this afternoon while we host convoys. We are working the afternoon with an IDT and things are smooth so far. Have a good Memorial Weekend.

Hi (b) (6),

Thanks for your email. I understand that a local blogger wrote about a contractor employee working on the Pretty Rocks Bridge site who says he was instructed by NPS to remove a large flag from his work vehicle while in the park.

There is no ban on flags in Denali National Park. It took me a minute with the holiday weekend, but I've now confirmed with staff, Federal Highways, and Granite that no NPS employee instructed Granite leadership or employees to remove flags from vehicles. My understanding is that Granite has a company policy that may cover what can be displayed on company vehicles. It's been challenging to get accurate information into the blogosphere so I welcome the chance to clarify with this group.

I've shared with this group before and do again here that Granite has been a good partner in making efforts to keep the visitor experience as uninterrupted as possible during a construction project of this size.

Have a good Memorial Day weekend,

Brooke

Fw: Denali flag comments for frontline staff

Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Mon 5/27/2024 7:20 AM

To: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>

Putting this on the top of your email- the talking point that is causing confusion for those who called the info line.

From: Merrell, Brooke**Sent:** Friday, May 24, 2024 11:24 AM**To:** NPS DENA Management Team <DENA_Management_Team@nps.gov>; (b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

Cc: Christian, Peter A <Peter_Christian@nps.gov>**Subject:** Denali flag comments for frontline staff

Supervisors, please share this messaging with appropriate frontline staff. If the first statement doesn't cover it for the individual, the second statement covers why administrative traffic (which Granite vehicles are) is managed to be unobtrusive. Staff is not expected to engage in debate. I've added (b) (6) instructions on how to handle interactions that are moving beyond what is below.

Visitors to Denali National Park and Preserve can fly flags, there are no restrictions on flags in the park. The NPS flies flags at many of our facilities in the park.

On the restricted portion of the Denali Park Road (mile 15-92) we manage vehicles to minimize visual disturbances to offer park visitors wildlife viewing in an exceptional wilderness landscape. On this road section administrative traffic, including the bus transportation system, is managed to be as unobtrusive as possible from the quantity of vehicles to their natural paint colors.

From (b) (6)

If your staff receives any complaints on this issue in person please have them acknowledge the complainant and offer a comment card or advise them they can email the park their complaint. If the complainant becomes aggressive or makes threats please disengage and contact ARCC right away and law enforcement will respond.

Staff that manage our info line and other avenues that we receive complaints through have been briefed. This message is more a general awareness that staff do not need to be subject to abuse and to please call ARCC immediately if they need assistance.

Thanks all, please communicate with your supervisor or me with any concerns.

Best, Brooke

[EXTERNAL] Re: Denali update**(b) (6)**

Sat 5/25/2024 3:42 PM

To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Cc: **(b) (6)**

This email has been received from outside of DOI - Use caution before clicking on links, opening attachments, or responding.

Hi Brooke,

Thank you very much for the update. And sorry for the delay in getting back to you, I was away from my email for a bit.

I have shared your earlier email with our team who has been tracking and will share this one as well. I will certainly let you know if any questions come up.

Thank you,

(b) (6)

On May 25, 2024, at 1:47 PM, Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov> wrote:

Hi **(b) (6)** and **(b) (6)**

I've got a few updates that you may already know. The director and senator finished a call not long ago.

I also just wrapped up with FHWA and Granite. I was able to fill in some of the gaps I had when we last spoke, including confirming that no NPS staff ordered the flag removed. Granite says they were implementing a company policy.

We will likely issue a statement Tuesday, sooner if I can, to the tune of "there is no ban..." Granite will also likely issue a statement.

Again, reach out with any questions. A text heads up before a call will help me know it's you while I field the incoming comments.

Best, Brooke

Denali WASO responses

Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sun 5/26/2024 8:15 AM

To: Christian, Peter A <Peter.Christian@nps.gov>

Good morning Pete,

Thanks for forwarding the questions from WASO.

1.) What was the purpose of the Denali employee for telling the FHWA officer about the complaint? Could it have been construed as an order from NPS to take the flag down?

This large construction project is a years long endeavor. With three parties being involved, we have set up a system where we forward complaints related to the project to the FHWA COR. That person conveys the messages appropriately applying the requirements of the contract. This has worked smoothly for the last year.

Complaints aren't uncommon, and don't always need a response (speeding, not stopping for wildlife crossing). This is just communicating and NPS does not have authority unless we go through a contracting process.

I got Granite leadership and FHWA on the phone yesterday to make sure no NPS employee ordered this. I asked directly about whether it was construed as such. I got a strong NO from both parties. Granite is taking full responsibility for the request to take down the flags.

2.) Who was the employee who talked to federal highways about the complaint (a seasonal or a more senior member of staff).

The employee is (b) (6) They are assigned to the project and frequently interact with FHWA. They communicated this complaint as an aside to a larger conversation about getting ready for the start of bus tour operations.

3). What was the park employee's answer to the visitor told who made the complaint. What bothered the visitor about the flag?

This is the comment as passed to Granite: I received a visitor complaint about a pick-up truck (assumed to be Granite) driving on the park road yesterday, west of Tek, with a "very large and obnoxious American flag attached to the vehicle and flapping in the wind".

The language of the complaint suggests to me that the visitor was a professional photographer or someone very familiar with wildlife behavior and was on foot or bike because the road was closed to public vehicles at the time. I don't have more information than that.

I do not have the employee's answer, but our staff is very good at politely thanking visitors for comments like this.

Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: (b) (6) Denali NPS Monthly Meetings

Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Wed 5/29/2024 8:28 AM

To (b) (6)

(b) (6) thanks. That means a lot.

From: (b) (6)

Sent: Monday, May 27, 2024 10:14 AM

To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Re: (b) (6) - Denali NPS Monthly Meetings

Brooke,

I understand that this issue was blown way beyond reasonable proportions recently and wanted to convey my sympathy for you and my respect for your professionalism. What a tough way to launch the busy summer season! Here's hoping your and other NPS staff's efforts to dispel hearsay and allow cooler heads to prevail will help this to blow over soon.

Good courage,

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

On May 25, 2024, at 17:03, Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov> wrote:

Hi (b) (6)

Thanks for your email. I understand that a local blogger wrote about a contractor employee working on the Pretty Rocks Bridge site who says he was instructed by NPS to remove a large flag from his work vehicle while in the park.

There is no ban on flags in Denali National Park. It took me a minute with the holiday weekend, but I've now confirmed with staff, Federal Highways, and Granite that no NPS employee instructed Granite leadership or employees to remove flags from vehicles. My understanding is that Granite has a company policy that may cover what can be displayed on company vehicles. It's been challenging to get accurate information into the blogosphere so I welcome the chance to clarify with this group.

I've shared with this group before and do again here that Granite has been a good partner in making efforts to keep the visitor experience as uninterrupted as possible during a

construction project of this size.

Have a good Memorial Day weekend,

Brooke

From: (b) (6)

Sent: Friday, May 24, 2024 7:18 AM

To: Denali Superintendent, NPS <Denali_Superintendent@nps.gov>; (b) (6)

[Redacted]

Cc: (b) (6)

[Redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: (b) (6) - Denali NPS Monthly Meetings

This email has been received from outside of DOI - Use caution before clicking on links, opening attachments, or responding.

Question, what is this business that an American contractor using American US funds to build a bridge in Denali Park, cannot fly the American flag. I hope this is just a rumor. We are using American tax payers' money to fund this project. Since when is flying the American flag a thing to be ashamed. On Memorial Day, where we honor soldiers that have bled for the freedom so that we can still fly the American flag. Please change this ridiculous decision.. We are not ashamed of being American.

Thank you,
(b) (6)

From: (b) (6) on behalf of Denali Superintendent, NPS

<Denali_Superintendent@nps.gov>

Sent: Friday, September 29, 2023 10:08 AM

To: (b) (6) Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>;

(b) (6)

Cc: (b) (6)

[Redacted content]

Subject: Canceled: (b) (6) - Denali NPS Monthly Meetings

When: Thursday, October 26, 2023 11:00 AM-12:00 PM.

Where: Microsoft Teams Meeting

Good afternoon (b) (6),

The October meeting is cancelled as was discussed at yesterday's meeting. Monthly meetings will resume in May.

Microsoft Teams meeting

(b) (6)

[Redacted content]

[Redacted content]

(b) (5) [Redacted]

[Redacted]

Re: [EXTERNAL] (b) (6) Denali NPS Monthly Meetings

Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Sun 5/26/2024 1:28 PM

To (b) (6)

(b) (6)

Thanks, made my day.

Brooke

From: (b) (6)

Sent: Saturday, May 25, 2024 5:40 PM

To: Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>

Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] (b) (6) - Denali NPS Monthly Meetings

Hello Brook,

This is to restate the obvious in my world (defined by those who possess at least *half* a brain): you're doing a GREAT job. We appreciate so much your energy and dedication to Denali's best interests.

And I'll add something you might not be able to convey in your official NPS responses:
F**k these MAGA idiots.

There. FIFY.

Happy summer to be,

(b) (6)

On May 25, 2024, at 6:03 PM, Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov> wrote:

Hi (b) (6),

Thanks for your email. I understand that a local blogger wrote about a contractor employee working on the Pretty Rocks Bridge site who says he was instructed by NPS to remove a large flag from his work vehicle while in the park.

There is no ban on flags in Denali National Park. It took me a minute with the holiday weekend, but I've now confirmed with staff, Federal Highways, and Granite that no NPS employee instructed Granite leadership or employees to remove flags from vehicles. My understanding is that Granite has a company policy that may cover what can be displayed on company vehicles. It's been challenging to get accurate information into the blogosphere so I welcome the chance to clarify with this group.

I've shared with this group before and do again here that Granite has been a good partner in making efforts to keep the visitor experience as uninterrupted as possible during a construction project of this size.

Have a good Memorial Day weekend,

Brooke

From: (b) (6)
Sent: Friday, May 24, 2024 7:18 AM
To: Denali Superintendent, NPS <Denali_Superintendent@nps.gov>; (b) (6)
 >; Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>; (b) (6)

Cc: (b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: (b) (6) - Denali NPS Monthly Meetings

This email has been received from outside of DOI - Use caution before clicking on links, opening attachments, or responding.

Question, what is this business that an American contractor using American US funds to build a bridge in Denali Park, cannot fly the American flag. I hope this is just a rumor. We are using American tax payers' money to fund this project. Since when is flying the American flag a thing to be ashamed. On Memorial Day, where we honor soldiers that have bled for the freedom so that we can still fly the American flag. Please change this ridiculous decision.. We are not ashamed of being American.

Thank you,
(b) (6)

From: (b) (6) > on behalf of Denali Superintendent, NPS
<Denali_Superintendent@nps.gov>

Sent: Friday, September 29, 2023 10:08 AM

To: (b) (6) Merrell, Brooke <brooke_merrell@nps.gov>;

(b) (6)

Cc: (b) (6)

[Redacted content]

Subject: Canceled: (b) (6) - Denali NPS Monthly Meetings

When: Thursday, October 26, 2023 11:00 AM-12:00 PM.

Where: Microsoft Teams Meeting

Good afternoon (b) (6),

The October meeting is cancelled as was discussed at yesterday's meeting. Monthly meetings will resume in May.

Microsoft Teams meeting

(b) (5)

[Redacted content]

[Redacted content]

[REDACTED] (b) (5) [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
