

Corri A. Feige
Commissioner



Department of
Natural Resources

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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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Army Guard safely removes “Into the Wild” bus from Stampede Trail

(Fairbanks, AK) – A 1940s-era Fairbanks city bus that became a sometimes deadly attraction to outdoor adventurers has been removed by helicopter from the remote side of the Teklanika River near Healy through a joint effort of Alaska’s Department of Natural Resources and the Alaska Army National Guard.

“After studying the issue closely, prioritizing public safety and considering a variety of alternatives, we decided it was best to remove the bus from its location on the Stampede Trail,” said Commissioner Corri A. Feige. “We’re fortunate the Alaska Army National Guard could do the job as a training mission to practice airlifting vehicles, at no cost to the public or additional cost to the State.”

The abandoned vehicle, variously known as “Bus 142,” or the “Into the Wild” bus, had been used by the Yutan Construction Co to house employees during the construction of a pioneer access road between Lignite and Stampede and was subsequently abandoned upon completion of the road in 1961. The bus is located approximately 25 miles west of the Parks Highway.

Used since as an emergency shelter, it became well-known after John Krakauer’s 1996 book “Into the Wild” and a 2007 movie with the same name popularized the story of 24-year-old wanderer Chris McCandless, who sadly died there alone in 1992 after a 114-day stay.

Numerous travelers have sought to reach the bus by retracing McCandless’ steps, and many have died, been injured or required search-and-rescue services while hiking in harsh weather or crossing the rain- and meltwater-swollen Teklanika or Savage rivers. Since 2010 two people have drowned on their way to or from the bus, prompting numerous calls to reduce or eliminate the hazard.

The bus was removed this morning, and will be stored at a secure location while DNR considers all options and alternatives for its permanent disposition, Feige said.

“We encourage people to enjoy Alaska’s wild areas safely, and we understand the hold this bus has had on the popular imagination,” said Feige. “However, this is an abandoned and deteriorating vehicle that was requiring dangerous and costly rescue

efforts. More importantly, it was costing some visitors their lives. I really appreciate the Alaska National Guard for making it possible to achieve a safe, respectful and economical solution to this situation.”

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CUTLINE: BUS 1 – The distinctive silhouette of a bus made famous by the “Into the Wild” book and movie traverses the skies today near Stampede Trail, as an Alaska Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopter moved it from its decades-long resting place west of the Parks Highway shortly before 1 p.m. ADT today.

CUTLINE: BUS 2 – A CH-47 Chinook helicopter from the 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment of the Alaska Army National Guard transports “Bus 142” “ from its longtime resting place on the Stampede Trail 25 miles west of Healy, on June 18, 2020. The Department of Natural Resources decided to move the bus in response to continuing and significant public safety hazards, injuries, and deaths related to the bus.

CUTLINE: BUS 3 – A CH-47 Chinook helicopter from the 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment of the Alaska Army National Guard deposited “Bus 142” on the ground east of the Teklanika River alongside the Stampede Road, after removing it today from its longtime resting place on the Stampede Trail 25 miles west of Healy.

CUTLINE BUS 4 – Bus 142 is shown with a UH 60 Blackhawk helicopter that supported the Alaska Army National Guard operation that transported the bus from the Stampede Trail to an interim staging point on the Stampede Road shortly before one 1 p.m. ADT today. The Department of Natural Resources will store the bus in a safe, secure location while considering options for its permanent disposition.