

# MEMORANDUM

# State of Alaska DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

**TO:** Rick Reed  
Habitat Division  
Douglas

**DATE:** September 4, 1991

**FILE NO.:**

**THRU:**

**TELEPHONE NO.:** 766-2830

**SUBJECT:** Northern Timber  
Applications

**FROM:** Ray Staska   
Area Management Biologist  
Commercial Fisheries Division  
Haines Office

I have reviewed two applications from Northern Timber Corporation concerning access to logging units in the Kelsall River management area. I have also spoken with Roy Josephson, DNR forester, about the details of both projects.

I have no objections to the application to replace a log culvert and widen a curve at 1.3 mile on the Kelsall road. The extent of fill has been reduced since original plans about 3 years ago and the road improvement is badly needed. Timing of work in this location should avoid spring cutthroat spawning period as well as fall coho spawning, i.e., no instream work after September 30.

I am opposed to the application to repair erosion from around abutments on the second bridge across Nataga creek including rip rap in the stream itself. Nataga creek has long been known as a king salmon spawning and rearing system. During the 1991 season the Sport Fish Division king salmon research project has documented the presence of king salmon spawners in Nataga creek. Over 145 king spawners have already been sampled in Nataga creek itself, which represents only a portion of the fish actually spawning in this system. Obviously, Nataga creek is an important king salmon producer. King salmon spawners are currently still spawning in the immediate vicinity of the subject bridge abutments and downstream. No instream activity should be permitted until the emergent fry from these spawners have left the system, probably June of 1992.

It is time for DNR to take a close look at the road and bridge crossings of the Nataga creek and delta area. Active logging sales have occurred beyond this stream over the past six years providing ample opportunity to fund a proper and long term road crossing of Nataga creek which will not impact and threaten the fisheries of this system. I believe it is obvious that past inriver work conducted by DNR has not been successful at maintaining a road and bridge crossing structure and has resulted in repeated erosion and impact to spawning areas in the lower portion of the system. For example, artificially constricting the flood flows of Nataga creek into one channel is, I believe, the main factor responsible for undermining the bridge abutment and the cause of a complete change in the location of the

Nataga creek mouth in 1989, when the east embankment eroded through just below the bridge abutment.

Alternatives to inwater fill must be developed. Lengthening the span of the second bridge crossing is an obvious place to start. Maintaining or allowing a secondary flood flow through the southern branch of Nataga creek is needed over the long term to avoid constricting and concentrating flows through a single channel which has threatened the roadway and bridge abutments and may have created a velocity problem for spawning king salmon.

At this time, it is also the last opportunity to bring all agencies and interested parties together in a cooperative effort to stabilize, improve and enhance king salmon spawning and rearing habitat in Nataga creek. Many of the techniques and information learned through the Big Boulder creek king salmon investigation should be considered and applied at the Nataga creek delta.

cc; Doug Mecum, CF  
Mike Bethers, SF  
Randy Erickson, SF  
Steve Elliott, SF  
Ron Josephson, FRED  
Craig Loomis, HSA  
David Nanney, ULCAC