

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME HABITAT AND RESTORATION DIVISION

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Van Sundberg
Project Environmental Coordinator
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Juneau

DATE: April 7, 1999

FILE: 71835

FROM: Ben Kirkpatrick
Habitat Biologist

SUBJECT: Skagway Airport Improvements Site Visit

On April 6, 1999 Van Sundberg, Cliff Douglas and Mark Sogge, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT); Jeff Hamilton and Jay Nelson, Hamilton Construction (HC); and I conducted a site inspection along the Skagway River. Our primary intent was to examine areas that HC would like to work in immediately, though we looked at all areas in the Skagway River that involve excavation or fill. The following are my observations and recollections from this inspection.

The fill area for the airport terminal building is currently not in the active area of the Skagway River. Once this area is isolated from tidewater, work in this area will not be subject to timing window restrictions. Any fill placed in areas subject to tidal flooding must be graded to allow uniform drainage with no pools or depressions remaining. Salmon fry and smolts will be outmigrating through this area until approximately mid-June, these fish will be particularly susceptible to stranding in any pools or depressions that are remaining in fill or excavation areas.

Generally the active river channel is out of the excavation area. A dike will be placed along the active channel to isolate the active channel from the excavation area. There are at least 2 areas where water will be diverted from minor channels into the primary active channel to allow excavation to occur out of flowing water. There are several pools in these areas that will need to be trapped to remove fish from the excavation area. These fish will then be placed in similar habitat in the primary active channel. DOT will be responsible for conducting the trapping.

Current permits allow inwater work in the Skagway River to occur only between November 1 and April 30, the berms are to be removed by this date. Water levels generally start to rise in May, which will likely flood the excavation areas. If water levels rise before this date and enter the work area, excavation must halt. If water levels remain low beyond May 1 and the excavation area remains dry, excavation may possibly be allowed to continue after an onsite

inspection confirms the area is stable and no fish habitat impacts are likely and ADF&G grants written authorization. Excavation is not to occur in flowing water, especially during the spring outmigration.

Salmon outmigration will cease near mid-June. If water levels are low during the summer, river excavation may be possible, but only after an onsite inspection and ADF&G grants written authorization. All inwater work or vehicle crossings would have to be completed by mid-August, when adult spawning salmon are expected to be migrating through the project area to the spawning grounds.

I appreciate the cooperation of HC and DOT in conducting this inspection.

cc: Bill Hanson, ADF&G, Douglas
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Dave Sturdevant, DEC, Juneau
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