

From: Jack Sinclair
To: Ramponi, Angela
Subject: Cooper Landing Bypass
Date: Wednesday, August 24, 2016 9:02:12 AM

Angela,

The Kenai Watershed Forum urges the Kenai Peninsula Borough to seek a reconsideration of the State of Alaska DOT's decision to move forward with the G South Alternative for the Cooper Landing Bypass project, MP 45-60 of the Sterling Highway.

From an environmental perspective, there are no ideal options offered by any of the alternatives. Each will have its own impact on important habitat for a variety of plant, fish, and wildlife species. An argument can be made for each one being better than the other depending on how you prioritize brown bear and moose habitat versus fish habitat, or loss of wetlands versus potential water quality degradation etc. The fact is that each alternative will result in negative environmental consequences. That being the case, the DOT highlights the Juneau Creek alternatives' impact on wetlands and human recreation, while showing less concern for the fact that the G South route will sustain substantial encroachments on the Kenai River and other noted Tier I Waterbodies.

The key difference between the G South and Juneau Creek alternatives is that the Juneau Creek Alt has the ability to direct major traffic flow (especially commercial vehicles transporting hazardous materials) **away from** the river. With 75% of the Juneau Creek alternatives being 500 ft or more from the river, response personnel will have additional time to contain potential HAZMAT spills before they cause serious harm to the Kenai River and its tributaries. The Juneau Creek alternatives bypass all crossings of the Kenai River, whereas the G South route will require an additional crossing and the replacement of the existing bridge at Schooner Bend.

Additionally, several more small stream and drainage crossings are required under the G South alternative. Although the greater percentage of wetlands and wildlife habitat impacted by the Juneau Creek routes are concerning, it does not outweigh the opportunity to prevent a major chemical spill or the opportunity to dramatically decrease general traffic adjacent to the river.

A possible compromise that needs to be investigated further is to extend the western end of the G South Alternative out to MP 55 to avoid a longer portion of the Kenai River AND do away with the building of an additional bridge across the Kenai River, perhaps saving \$50 million from this alternative.

It is unfortunate that every alternative to this point has its shortcomings where challenges must be faced regarding sensitive cultural resources, wildlife habitat and congressionally-designated Wilderness. Weighing the potential impacts to each of these against those to the Kenai River and other Tier I Waterbodies is a difficult but necessary task from which we must now make a decision.

Thanks for allowing Kenai Watershed Forum to provide our input.

Sincerely,
Jack Sinclair

Jack Sinclair
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