



HATCHER PASS RECREATIONAL AREA ACCESS, TRAILS AND TRANSIT FACILITIES

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AGENCY SCOPING MEETING

DECEMBER 8, 2008

NOTES

Maryellen Tuttell (DOWL HKM) provided a brief overview of the project and explained the components of the project as well as the timeline. Kristen Hansen (DOWL HKM) then discussed the environmental fieldwork that has been completed to date (see attached PowerPoint presentation). Questions and discussion items during this meeting are summarized below. DOWL HKM staff responses are in italics.

Where were the macro-invertebrates found and what type of sampling was done in the area?

There were 24 samples collected in 2 tributary streams of the Little Susitna River within the 2 study areas with an upstream and downstream location. In each sampled stream, three drift samples and three benthic samples were collected along a transect across the width of the stream. Up to 500 invertebrates were sorted from each sample and identified to genus, when possible. Approximately 20 percent (or a minimum of 35) Chironomidae were slide-mounted and identified to genus.

All field study reports will be made available for agency review after they have gone through Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) review, most likely in January or February 2009.

Is the FTA the Lead Agency?

Yes, FTA is the lead agency and will be funding the transportation improvements associated with the project. It was stated that FTA will fund the access roads, transit facilities, parking areas, etc. FTA noted that they do not delegate authority to the MSB. FTA will also review all reports before they are released to any other agency.

Is there an ongoing process to develop a management plan for the area?

It was also noted that a management plan amendment is just beginning. The State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is re-writing this plan and it is expected to be complete

sometime this winter. While in this process DNR is interested in various types of recreational development, as well as summer opportunities for the area. Bruce Phelps will be the project manager from DNR on this management plan.

Ron Swanson (RWS, MSB contract manager) indicated that mountain biking and other non-motorized activities in the summer months will be considered. Ron also noted that the section of the Hatcher Pass Management Plan on Government Peak is not being revisited in the plan revision as it was updated in 2006.

What was the methodology used for the wetland, habitat and vegetation mapping?

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) methodology was used for this mapping. Detailed maps as well as reports on the findings are being developed. Once they have gone through the review process they will be released to the agencies. This will most likely take place in January or February 2009.

Will there be any additional fieldwork done next summer?

As a part of scoping, the project team would like to know if any of the agency representatives feel that additional field studies are needed.

It was stated that once the agencies are able to review the data that has been collected as well as the protocols that were used, they will have a better idea of what additional work may be required.

What type of discharge data was collected during the aquatic surveys?

Stream flow measurements were taken each time a habitat reach was conducted.

Will the aquatic habitat report be a separate report?

Yes, there will be three separate reports done to discuss the fieldwork done to date. The first report will contain the aquatic habitat, macro invertebrate survey and fish habitat. The second report will include the wetland mapping, vegetation mapping and habitat mapping. The third report will include the cultural resources and historic sites.

Have surveys been surveys done, etc., to develop the purpose and need for this project?

DNR has recognized the need for this additional recreation area for many years. The various plans that have been done in the past in an effort to develop the recreation area have also received public input on the need for the project. There were several surveys done in the 1980s to identify the need for the project. A representative from DNR noted that this is the most used recreation area in the State's inventory.

The 16-mile ski run is being looked at by the Division of Parks and Recreation in the MSB. It was noted that the Hatcher Pass project should be coordinated with the Division of Parks and

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Recreation to try and provide additional transit options in the pickup and drop off areas of 16-mile and paradise ski runs to address areas of heavy traffic in the early and late winter and improve safety. It was also stated that the Division of Parks and Recreation has statistical data on use of the area.

The USACE representative noted that there is no additional floodplain information available, and there are no Section 10 waters within the project area. Permits will most likely be required from the USACE.

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