

Existing Conditions

The project area crosses the Campbell Creek Greenbelt, which is used by wildlife as habitat and as a migration corridor. The wetlands adjacent to Tina Lake are also used as wildlife habitat. Other locations in the project area consist of highly developed industrial/urban setting with patches of fragmented habitat that provides ~~marginal~~ wildlife habitat.

Birds

HDR Alaska conducted bird surveys to document species presence, habitat associations, and nesting in the study area during June 2004. Bird surveys were conducted at Campbell Creek upstream and downstream of the Dowling Road bridge and Tina Lake. Twenty-five species were documented in the study area. These species are all commonly found in the Anchorage area. See Appendix D for a list of bird species recorded during the surveys and where they were detected.

Bald Eagles

Bald eagles are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. The USFWS enforces the Act by restricting land use in a 330-foot buffer around bald eagle nesting trees. No bald eagle nests have been identified within the vicinity of the proposed project (Conner 2004; Seaberg 2004).

Mammals

Moose and muskrat inhabit portions of the study area. Red squirrel, coyote, short-tailed weasel, mink, beaver, snowshoe hare, shrew, and a variety of small rodents can also be found in the study area. Small numbers of brown bear, black bear, lynx and red fox reside in the Anchorage Bowl but are infrequently seen in the study area. None of these mammals is on the ADF&G species of special concern list. These animals are not unique to the study area.

The existing Campbell Creek bridge abutments are near the edge of the creek. Consequently, the

bridge does not adequately accommodate terrestrial wildlife crossing. Because the amount of dry land between the creek bank and the bridge abutment is not sufficient, large mammals must travel in the creek. The existing bridge provides approximately 6 feet of clearance, which is not adequate to facilitate moose passage. ADF&G expressed a concern about vehicle-moose collisions at this crossing (Anderson 2003). DOT&PF Highway Analysis System records indicate that there have been two reported vehicle-moose collisions on Dowling Road between Old Seward Highway and Potter Drive in the last 15 years. The Campbell Creek bridge also causes habitat fragmentation.

Environmental Consequences

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impact on wildlife resources. The existing bridge would remain and continue to impede wildlife movement and fragment habitat (Anderson 2003).

Under the Proposed Action, long-term impacts to wildlife are expected to be minimal. Wildlife habitat will be minimally affected by vegetation removal and fill in or around Tina Lake. Removal of vegetation would reduce the food supply and habitat for wildlife. Approximately 3.7 acres of vegetation would be removed.

The Proposed Action would increase the amount of habitat fragmentation in the study area. **Near Tina Lake** However, much of the area that would be affected has been disturbed and adjacent areas would remain usable as habitat. **Habitat fragmentation will also occur near the ChangePoint Church. This patch of forested habitat is used by moose for feeding and resting. It is also used as transit link between other blocks of habitat. This project will permanently alter this habitat by removing vegetation and increasing traffic noise. However, some of the existing habitat has already been removed due to the development of a recreational facility. Habitat will also be**

removed as part of the MOA's 68th Avenue extension project.

In Anchorage 2020, the area being impacted is not identified as important wildlife habitat. Anchorage 2020 does identify important wildlife habitat, such as Blueberry Lake and Connors Bog, near the project area.

The Campbell Creek bridge would provide approximately 10 ~~42~~ feet of clearance that could be used by migrating wildlife. Wildlife, including moose, would be able to cross under the bridge, providing a safer route across Dowling Road than the current route. The availability of an under-bridge crossing is expected to enhance wildlife movement in the area and reduce the number of vehicle-moose collisions.

In 2003, ADF&G requested 10 feet of clearance originally under the Campbell Creek bridge to allow for wildlife passage (Anderson 2003). DNR-OHMP is now requesting a minimum of 14 feet of clearance. Raising the road/bridge elevation to provide additional clearance is not a practicable option because it would result in additional ROW impacts and would require the acquisition of additional land from the Campbell Creek Greenbelt. The Campbell Creek Greenbelt is considered a Section 4(f)/6(f) resource. Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act and Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act protect land from being converted to non-recreational uses except when there is no feasible and prudent alternative. When there is no alternative, the impacts to the resource must be minimized.

Alternative ways of increasing ~~ed~~ the clearance under the bridge without increasing the elevation were explored, including lowering the ground on the west side of the bridge and reducing the depth of the bridge girders. Lowering the ground to provide a minimum of 14 feet of clearance, would bring the ground level would be below the water level of Campbell Creek. This area is likely to have

standing or flowing water at all times making it less suitable for moose passage.

The proposed bridges uses girders that are 65 inches in depth and are designed to accommodate an additional 4 inches of asphalt. Reducing the bridge depth can be accomplished by using a 54 inch girder. However, at 100 feet long, the bridge is near the maximum practical length of the 54 inch girder.

Switching to a steel bridge would reduce the bridge depth. However, a steel bridge would require piers beneath the bridge in the 100-year floodplain. A steel bridge would also be approximately 25 feet longer than a bulb-tee girder bridge. In general, DOT&PF prefers not to use steel bridges because it costs more to operate and maintain them than a bulb-tee girder bridge.

The bridge design will be developed in more detail during the design phase of the project. In that phase, DOT&PF will continue to coordinate with DNR-OHMP regarding moose passage under the Campbell Creek bridge.

Roadway noise is not expected to be a concern near Tina Lake, even though noise levels are expected to increase. All species found in the study area are common in the Anchorage area. The existing industrial development would have caused any noise-sensitive species to relocate elsewhere.

Construction

Construction would generate noise and dust levels that discourage use of the surrounding undisturbed area by wildlife. These impacts would be temporary and would not occur after construction was completed.

Road construction activities would disrupt the activities of land mammals. These effects would be greatest near Tina Lake where there is no existing roadway.

Birds in and immediately adjacent to the roadway would be disturbed by construction, which would temporarily displace birds from nesting, resting, and foraging habitat. Nesting waterfowl might abandon nests if disturbed by construction activities. Construction activities might affect individual birds and nest productivity. However, it is expected that birds would relocate to adjacent habitat and the overall impacts on birds would not result in measurable population changes. No vegetation clearing activities would occur during the **migratory bird** nesting season **established by the USF&WS**.

Mitigation and Authorizations

To mitigate the amount of habitat fragmentation, the bridge over Campbell Creek would provide more clearance than the **existing bridge (approximately 4 additional feet)** ~~10-foot~~ requested by ~~ADF&G~~ to allow for wildlife passage (~~Anderson—2003~~). The improved bridge over Campbell Creek would provide wildlife an alternative to crossing Dowling Road. This alternative crossing route is expected to reduce the number of vehicle-moose encounters.

~~Low-level bridge deck~~ Lighting would be provided on the **bridge upgraded road** to allow pedestrians and motorists to see moose that may get onto bridges.

Construction **clearing** would occur outside the **migratory bird** nesting period **as established by the USF&WS** ~~to the extent feasible~~. **In Anchorage, the bird nesting period is May 1 thru July 15.**