

VI. COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

This project has been in development for many years with much agency and public involvement. Correspondence is on file at the Department's Anchorage Office. The latest coordination with agencies was initiated through correspondence on May 9, 1989. Notices of the proposed project were published in both Anchorage newspapers on June 30 and July 9, 1989, and in the *Frontiersman* (a Matanuska-Susitna area paper) on July 5 and July 14, 1989. Concerns of various agencies and the general public were later identified through correspondence, telephone contacts, and meetings, and are also on file at the Department.

Notices of public hearing and document availability were published in the newspapers on May 4 and June 1, 1992. Copies of the document were distributed to the agencies on May 13, 1992. Public Hearings were held in Palmer, Chickaloon, Sutton, and Glacier View between June 8 and June 11, 1992. Comments and recommendations received are contained in Appendix I and included below.

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) concluded that the proposed highway modifications would have minimal impacts to fishery resources. They request that wetlands fill be minimized and no fill or structures be placed in such a manner that would alter or impede stream flow.

U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) reviewed the draft EA and concluded that navigability determinations are needed for project area rivers where new bridge crossings are proposed. Should USCG determine that any of these rivers are navigable, Section 9 permits will be required. Navigability information will be collected by the Department and provided to USCG prior to final design.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS) was concerned about the presence of the American peregrine falcon, a species listed as endangered or threatened, reported to be in the project area during migration periods. A survey was conducted during July of 1989 to determine if nests are located within the area. None were located. USF&WS provided an initial wetlands determination for the project area. A bird survey was also conducted by USF&WS and Department staff in wetlands along the proposed Long Lake realignment in July of 1992. No unique bird or mammal species or unusual concentration of other animals were observed during the survey. The USF&WS has concluded that project impacts be reassessed prior to final design for

each roadway segment to determine the need for any wildlife or wetlands compensatory mitigation.

Recommendations and comments were provided by the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) after their review of the draft Environmental Assessment (EA). These were incorporated into the EA and included the following: provision for public access to the Caribou Creek Recreational Mining Area, water quality near Palmer, wildlife mitigation, and historic and archaeological preservation. There was no objection to ~~Section 4(f) approval of the project~~ providing the Section 6(f) and Section 106 Memorandums of Agreement were finalized and that the Department further coordinate with USF&WS for a bird survey to determine the need for any wildlife mitigation (refer to Appendix I).

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) had comments and concerns about potential impacts to fish and wildlife habitat, the need for continued access to trailheads, and provisions for scenic and wildlife viewing pullouts (refer to Appendix I). The Department met with ADF&G on September 4 and 18, 1992. As a result of the meetings, a Reimbursable Services Agreement (RSA) will be developed with ADF&G to identify any critical moose crossing zones within the project corridor. The ADF&G has requested that project impacts be reassessed prior to final design for each roadway segment to determine the need for any wildlife or wetlands compensatory mitigation. Due to the passage of time between document approval and actual design of the various project segments, ADOT&PF will have to reevaluate its approved environmental document. Should project scope, affected environment, impacts and mitigation change, additional environmental documentation is required.

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) reviewed the draft EA and had concerns on potential construction impacts to wetlands. Their recommendations were incorporated into Section U., Construction Impacts.

A memorandum from the **Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB), Planning Department** provided comments from various Borough Divisions and Departments. According to the Platting Division, proposed right-of-way acquisition must conform to MSB 16.15.070 - Right-of-Way Acquisition Plats. Code compliance, MSB 17.55, for easement requirements, and building setback lines, shall be met. Coastal Management consistency will be adhered to, and a cultural resources survey should be conducted. Department of Public Works suggests a more western shift of the road in the vicinity of Fishhook-Willow Road (MP 49) because of severe erosion of the

Matanuska River bluff. They also request that during the design phase we address access congestion at the fairground and heavy truck traffic at the entrance to the gravel pits south of the highway at MP 37.

The MSB also reviewed the draft EA and the assembly adopted Resolution No. 92-098 approving the project, identifying a need for scenic pullouts and access to existing trailheads, and to consider a separated pathway between MP 35 and Sutton.

State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Office of History and Archaeology (OHA) have been involved with reconnaissance level surveys for the proposed realignments and Section 106 coordination. An area identified as crucial is the Long Lake District. Other concerns include the historic properties in the Palmer vicinity. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was developed to formalize mitigation commitments on the Patten Farm (refer to Appendix E).

Historic Borough area structures are the primary concerns of the **Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Division of Cultural Resources**. An initial assessment of Matanuska Colony and other historic structures within the Palmer vicinity was conducted during 1986. The Borough submitted a multiple property nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) on September 30, 1990. Structures of primary concern in Palmer are the Patten Farm, the Puhl-Bacon Farmhouse, and the Bailey-Estelle House and Barn. The Bennet home near Sutton (MP 60) was investigated by the Cultural Office. (A MOA was developed to formalize mitigation commitments as stated above.)

Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation (DPOR), has developed conceptual plans for park development and management opportunities for the Long Lake State Recreation Site (SRS). The DPOR supports the proposed realignment through the park. A MOA was developed to formalize mitigation commitments for the park (refer to Appendix D). They would like to coordinate pullouts for trailheads and scenic views, and accesses to existing and proposed campground and recreation facilities.

At the Long Lake State Wayside, a well was drilled within the right-of-way with grant money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (L&WCF). **National Park Service (NPS)** determined that right-of-way acquisition within the parkland would require Section 6(f) conversion. A MOA was developed to formalize conversion commitments for the park which was reviewed and approved by NPS.

A meeting was held with the **Matanuska-Susitna Borough Department of Natural Resources DPOR** and **Matanuska-Susitna Trails Committee** on August 18, 1989. The DPOR submitted wayside recommendations for the project corridor, and a separate bike pathway in the vicinity of Palmer was requested by the Mat-Su Trails Committee.

Eklutna, Incorporated has patent to the Moose townsite which would be traversed with the ~~proposed realignment~~. They recommend the reduction of the 300-foot easement to 100 feet through this area, and would like to see a highway wayside constructed adjacent to Moose Creek in the vicinity of the dedicated park land.

Sutton Community Council wants rehabilitation of the roadway to improve safety conditions. Foremost are the problems of vehicular passing of slower moving traffic and the merging of local and through traffic within the community. However, they want the Department to be sensitive to potential right-of-way impacts on local property owners. Property mentioned included the designated future Cultural Center and Council Office of the Chickaloon Native Community, located at Moose Creek, and a possible historic site, converted into a residence, at MP 60. A meeting was held with the community council on August 7, 1989.

Sutton Alpine Historical Society is proposing a future historical park within the community, located on the east corner of the Chickaloon Way intersection. They would like to coordinate on park access although conceptual park plans are not complete. Sites of local significance within the community are adjacent to the roadway, the coal washing plant foundation and four grave houses.

There are three primary concerns of the **Chickaloon/Moose Creek Native Association**, and **Chickaloon Traditional Village Council**. Potential impacts on local subsistence resources and protection of critical moose habitat areas. Avoidance and preservation of burials and other cultural sites. A meeting was held with the village council on September 5, 1989.

Chickaloon Community Council concerns focus on safety issues and condition of the existing roadway: narrow facility lacking adequate shoulders, need for passing lanes on the hills, vehicular passing of slower moving traffic within the community proper, and lack of sight distance around the bluff at the Chickaloon River Road intersection. They want an opportunity to review and comment on proposed pulloff

sites in their locality. A meeting was held with the community council on October 10, 1989.

Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) reviewed the draft EA and has requested opportunity for review of any plans for the proposed Moose Creek realignment, and for plans in other areas which would involve ARRC right-of-way (refer to Appendix I).