BILL SHEFFIELD, GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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May 12, 1983

Mr. Eric F. Myers Northern Alaska Environmental Center 833 Gambell Street - Suite B Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Dear Mr. Myers:

Re: Susitna Hydroelectric Project

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) has reviewed your letter of April 25, 1983, wherein the Department's evaluation of potential impacts to fishery resources of the Susitna River and tributaries attributable to construction and operation of the Susitna Hydroelectric Project is requested. Your questions stem from comments made by a representative of the Alaska Power Authority (APA) at a public briefing hosted by the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association on March 25, 1983.

The ADF&G position on the assessment of potential impacts to fishery resources associated with the Susitna Hydroelectric Project has not changed appreciably from that outlined in the ADF&G correspondence you have referenced. The Department's interest in gaining sufficient data to identify and quantify potential impacts to fisheries and in developing an acceptable mitigation plan continues to be demonstrated. As recently as 23 January 1983 in comments to the APA on the Draft Exhibit E of the license application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the ADF&G recommended that additional data collection and analysis be undertaken by the APA to address more comprehensively potential impacts to fishery resources and mitigation planning.

The questions you have asked in your April 25, 1983 letter and our responses follow.

1. "Has the availability of the 1982 open water field season_data provided the Department with sufficient information to project a worst case senario for the project's fishery impacts?"

Fishery data from the 1982 field season have been made available to the APA and its contractors. We expect that they will consider this information in conjunction with data collected previously to assess impacts. Once an update of the impact assessment is made available to us, we will evaluate its adequacy. The ADF&G developed a recommended

Mr. Eric F. Myers

The SuHydro study team has not conducted comprehensive fishery studies of the Susitna River below Talkeetna. Therefore, the level of understanding of that reach of the Susitna is relatively low. The ADF&G is on record as recommending sufficient study of the Susitna River downstream from Talkeetna to assess potential impacts from changes in water quality and quantity.

5. "Does the Department feel that changes in water quality parameters (as distinguished from physical impacts associated with changes in flow regimes) can be discounted as a possible source of significant impacts?"

Changes in water quality during project operation may adversely affect fishery resources of the Susitna River system. Io_date the affects of changes in temperature and turbidity have not been fully assessed. We understand that the APA is planning to conduct a temperature monitoring study that will help in the assessment of potential impacts of the operational temperature regime on fisheries.

6. "With the APA undertaking active reconsideration of the scope and scale of the project (e.g. lowering the Watana Dam height, building Devil Canyon first, only building one dam, etc.) can the Department adequately evaluate the fishery impacts to be expected from the project?"

The ADF&G has not been provided plans and specifications for alternatives to the Susitna Hydroelectric Project other than those contained in the Draft Exhibit E. Therefore we are unable to assess the related impacts to fisheries attributable-to-those alternatives.

Sincerely,

Don W. Collinsworth Commissioner

cc: R. Logan

- C. Yanagawa
- R. Redick
- D. Daisy
- A. Kingsbury