

# STATE OF ALASKA

JAY S. HAMMOND, Governor

## WATER RESOURCES BOARD

August 21, 1979

Governor Jay Hammond  
Pouch A  
Juneau, AK 99811

Re: Chena River Flood Control Project  
U.S. Corps of Engineers

Dear Governor Hammond:

At our just completed meeting of the Alaska State Water Resources Board we heard a large divergence of opinions on the Flood Control Project.

The following is a brief outline of the testimony presented:

1. The final level will (not) cause erosion through the southwest branch of the Tanana at the relocated pressure point (or some point in between).
2. If the Tanana seeks a new channel, the Chena river will (not) be lowered (due to impoundment at its confluence with the Tanana) by four feet plus or minus and become navigable.  
on
3. If the Chena lowers, the State and probably the Borough may be liable for damages (\$10-100 million).
4. As the levee and groins changing the course of the river are a man-induced action, the State may have no insurance coverage.
5. The Corps is powerless to build a levee or training groin on the southwest bank of the Tanana because such an effort would be for erosion control which cannot be included in a flood control project.
6. The technical assistance of the State and Federal government is exhausted due to the unique nature of the Tanana (braided stream), but opinions were presented that there are Canadian, German and Swiss concerns that have modeled similar stream systems.
7. The Corps is preparing a call for bids at this time (award in October) and may (not) be frozen to a this year or never budget problem.

8. Although all but this final stage is completed, Fairbanks is exposed to some flood damage should one occur without the final stage of the levee system.

Based on this information, we recommend the following action for your consideration:

1. Call an immediate (due to bid date) policy level meeting of the following persons:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
U.S. Corps	Project Engineer
Commissioner, DNR	Water Management
Commissioner, Department of Administration	Risk Management
Commissioner, DOTPF	Railway and Airport Protection
Mayor, North Star Borough	Local input and project maintenance

This meeting should try to determine if the project alternative is technically viable and meets the objective of the political, social and economic objectives of the project.

2. If possible, we would recommend a one year delay in construction of the final stage.
3. If a one year extension can be had, the State should immediately contract with an outside entity to do a hydrologic model of the river and construction design to determine the effect on the river and optimum design.

Should the policy be established to go forward with the final stage of the Chena River Flood Control Project, then we would recommend that:

1. Monitoring equipment be installed immediately in both the Tanana and Chena in order to evaluate the effect of the river change.
2. Criteria be set based on the monitoring to establish when or if something must be done to prevent permanent damage to navigation of the Chena.
3. Assuming both the State and Borough may be liable for damages, negotiate a joint venture (50/50) for design and construction of mitigation measures should they be warranted. Such a design would be initiated immediately and construction (if needed) would be signaled by criteria established in item 2 above.

The suggestions were put together by this Board in the spirit that identification and preparation for prevention is better than trying to deal with the cure should the worst fears happen. We hope that these

August 21, 1979

suggestions will assist your establishment of a policy concerning completion of the Chena River Flood Control Project.

We stand ready to assist in any manner we can.

Very truly yours,

*Richard H. Sims*  
Richard H. Sims  
Chairman *chp*

cc: Commissioner Ward -- DOTPF  
Commissioner Hudson -- DOA  
Commissioner LeResche -- DNR  
Colonel Lee Nunn -- Corps of Engineers  
Mayor John Carlson -- North Slope Borough