

Acres American, Inc.
Susitna Hydroelectric Project
Feasibility and License Study

680

~~C.21 Loss of Recreation Benefits~~

We agree that whitewater raft trips and salmon fishing are commonly attributed higher net benefits per recreation day than boating or fishing on a reservoir. The U.S. Forest Service, for example, values freshwater sport fishing in Alaska at \$18.00 (in 1980 dollars) per recreation visitor day. Anadromous sport fishing is valued at \$52 per day (U.S. Forest Service 1983).

The project, however, is not expected to have ^{an} appreciable impact on salmon fishing in the project area. Salmon migrate the Susitna up to Portage Creek just below Devil Canyon (E-7-21). Several popular salmon fishing spots exist in the area (e.g., Stephan Lake, Prairie Creek, Lower Portage Creek, Chunilna Creek and Indian River) but will not be adversely affected by the project. Further, it is anticipated that the Susitna salmon fishery, downstream from Watana Dam, may be improved by the project (E-7-28).

The project would produce lower valued reservoir fishing opportunities in addition to, not in place of, the higher valued salmon fishing. There would, therefore, be no net loss of recreation benefits related to fishing.

The specialized nature of whitewater rafting and kayaking generally dictates a high user day value. Because of the small number of users in the project area, however, the user day value would have to be extraordinarily high to produce a significant economic value for the lost opportunities. Devil Canyon Rapids, for example, has been tried by fewer than 40 kayakers (E-7-22). ^{Such} its limited use suggests that the economic value of the resource is not large enough to receive extensive analysis, ~~despite the fact that there are analytical techniques which could be used to determine willingness to pay. The real loss in Devil Canyon is not an economic loss, but the loss of a unique natural environment and a unique recreation experience.~~

References

U.S. Forest Service. 1983. Joe Mehrkens, Regional Economist; personal communication. December 1983.