



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

January 24, 2005

Ricky Gease, Executive Director
Kenai River Sportfishing Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 1228
Soldotna, AK 99669

Dear Mr. Gease,

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) supports the Kenai Riverbank Restoration and Sportfishing Access Project at Morgan's Landing State Recreational Area. The project, managed by the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR), will provide access to the river while protecting and maintaining critical riparian habitat.

The project consists of five elements. In 2004, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and DPOR funded removing the jetty at this site, filling an unused boat basin, and restoring 120 feet of bank to improve juvenile salmonid habitat (elements 1-3). The bank stabilization and revegetation will be completed this spring. To complete the project, DPOR has proposed constructing a 90 foot elevated light penetrating gratewalk with two access stairways to improve angler access and protect the riverbank (elements 4 and 5).

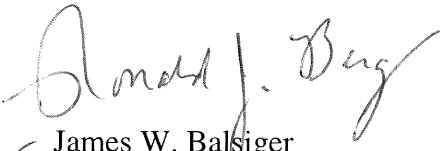
A gratewalk is critical at this site to protect the new vegetation, while giving anglers access that will not damage the bank. The 90 feet of gratewalk proposed is appropriate for the site and will adequately protect the bank restoration work already funded. Without controlled access, the large number of anglers that use the area will damage the restored streamside vegetation.

Human activities and development throughout the Kenai Watershed affect anadromous fish resources. The most apparent fish habitat alterations include loss of terrestrial vegetation overhanging the river, loss of undercut banks, and localized changes to water velocities from structures. These near shore habitats are of most importance to rearing juvenile salmonids. NMFS has long been concerned that the cumulative impact of the large and growing number of human activities will decrease the capacity of the Kenai to produce the historically valuable salmon runs. The proposed project would significantly limit angler impacts on the restored bank while increasing access to an important fishery. NMFS fully supports DPOR's proposal.



Brian Lance is the NMFS contact for this project, and can be reached by telephone at (907) 271-1301.

Sincerely,


For James W. Balsiger
Administrator, Alaska Region