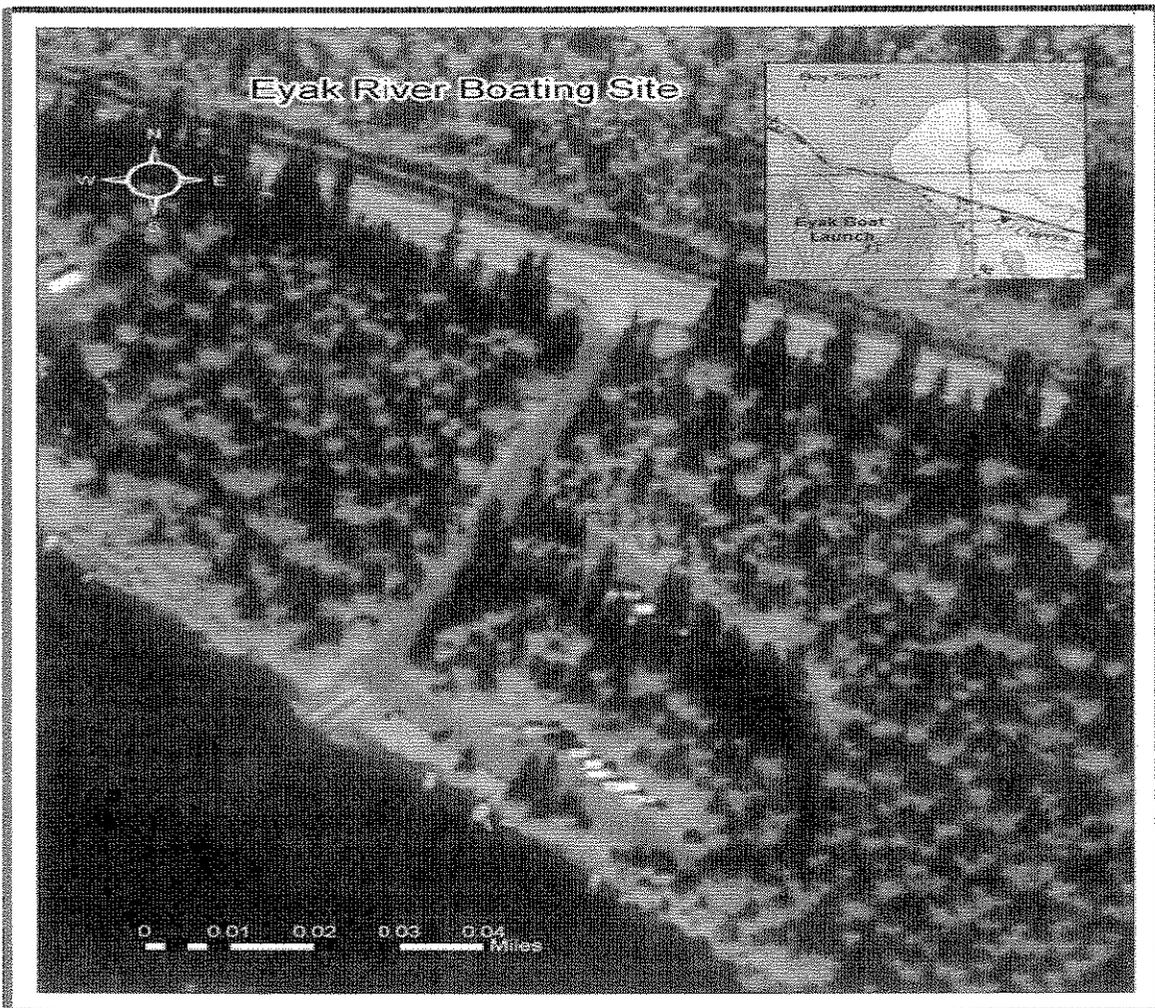


**Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact  
Eyak River Boating Site Project  
USDA Forest Service  
Cordova Ranger District, Chugach National Forest  
Valdez-Cordova Borough, Alaska  
Section 31, T15S, R2E, CRM**

**Project Location and Background**

The Eyak River Boating Site is located at milepost 6 of the Copper River Highway and along the north bank of the Eyak River approximately 800 yards downstream of the Eyak River Bridge (see Figure 1). The Eyak River Boating Site is a Forest Service developed recreation site and is managed as a public boat launch. The Eyak River Boating Site provides a boat ramp for access onto Eyak River, parking for vehicles, and a restroom. Users of the Eyak River Boating Site are primarily hunting, sport and subsistence fishing, recreating, and accessing special use permit cabins on the Eyak River. The Eyak Boating Site is primarily used during the summer and is particularly busy during the Coho salmon fishing season—August through September. The Eyak Boating Site provides the only public access boat launch onto the Eyak River.



## Decision

I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment for the Eyak River Boating Site Project and the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) contained as part of this decision document. In addition, I have considered all supporting documents and the public comments.

Based on the analysis and public comments it is my decision to select Alternative 3. This alternative will allow for reconstruction of the Eyak River Boating Site. It will also provide a 90-foot vegetative green strip buffer between adjacent private property to the west of the Eyak River Boating Site in order to provide visual screening and buffer noise from users of the Eyak River Boating Site. Alternative 3 will be implemented as follows:

- (1) Removal and rehabilitation of the existing access road into the Eyak River Boating Site and constructing a new two lane access road into the site to address and correct traffic flow issues.
- (2) Removal of the existing restroom facility and construction of a new restroom facility above the 100-year flood event elevation.
- (3) Construction of 19 parking spaces for vehicles and 15 parking spaces for vehicles with trailers on the west end of Eyak River Boating Site.
- (4) Stabilizing the stream bank by placing logs parallel to the stream bank to reduce erosion from boat wakes and enable revegetation of areas currently eroded.
- (5) Removal of the existing boat ramp and installing a new 30-foot wide accessible boat ramp that can accommodate two trailers. The new boat ramp will be approximately 70 feet upstream from the existing ramp and 90 feet from adjacent residential property.
- (6) Construction of four hardened walkways from the parking area to the river bank to facilitate public access to where boats are beached, and also to mitigate erosion effects from foot traffic.
- (7) Placing small cobble or gravel on the beach area to reduce erosion and turbidity caused by foot traffic.

As part of my decision we will also implement the design features and required monitoring as described in the EA and included as Exhibit 1 to this document.

My decision is based on and supported by the analysis presented in the EA and the supporting documents contained in the Project Record<sup>1</sup>. The EA fulfills the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) at the site specific level. This project is consistent with the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Chugach National Forest (Chugach Forest Plan); including applicable amendments.

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<sup>1</sup> Project Record is on file at the Cordova Ranger District.

## **Reasons for the Decision**

I selected Alternative 3 because this alternative best meets the purpose and need of the project and responds to issues identified during public involvement on the project.

Specifically, Alternative 3 will:

- Help meet recreation demand (especially during the Coho salmon season) by constructing a larger parking area with 19 parking spaces for vehicles and 15 parking spaces for vehicles with trailers.
- Help meet recreation demand and improve accessibility by replacing the existing single trailer boat ramp with a 30-foot wide accessible boat ramp that can accommodate two trailers.
- Provide more orderly traffic flow and remove encroachment by removing the existing access road and constructing a new access road 200 feet east.
- Minimize the potential for septic system flooding into Eyak River by removing the existing restroom and constructing a new restroom above the 100 year flood event elevation.
- Alleviate erosion from recreation use of the Eyak River Boating Site by placing a single row of logs parallel to the stream bank and placing small cobble or gravel on the beach area to reduce erosion and turbidity caused by foot traffic.
- Help screen construction activities and public use of the Eyak River Boating Site from adjacent private property through the maintenance of a 90-foot vegetative green strip buffer between adjacent private property to the west of the Eyak River Boating Site.

## **Alternatives Considered**

In addition to the selected alternative, I considered two other alternatives—no action and Alternative 2. Taking no action would not result in any changes to the Eyak Boating Site. Alternative 2 is similar to the selected alternative except that it has three more parking spaces than alternative 3 and provides a 30 foot (instead of 90 foot) vegetative buffer between the Eyak River Boating Site and adjacent private property.

The no-action alternative was not chosen because the issues of unsafe traffic flow patterns into the site, existing encroachment onto private property, limited parking capacity, and stream bank erosion from foot traffic and boat wakes would continue to worsen.

Alternative 2 was not chosen because it would require removing more vegetation than Alternative 3, and would provide a limited natural buffer of 30 feet between the boat launch site and adjacent private property. Alternative 3 provides a 90-foot green strip vegetation buffer, which should result in greatly diminished visual and noise impacts to adjacent private property and the public using the boat launch. Although Alternative 2 provides three additional parking spaces when compared to Alternative 3, I feel that it is more important to provide reduced noise and visual impacts between the Eyak Boating Site and adjacent private property than to provide additional parking. In addition, the recreation analysis did not

indicate that three fewer parking spaces would result in any substantial difference in meeting recreation demand.

### **Public Involvement**

This project was first listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions for Environmental Analysis in the April 2011 quarterly report. The 30-day comment period started on May 2, 2011 with a legal notice published in the Cordova Times. A public meeting was held in Cordova on May 10, 2011 to present the proposed action and receive comments. The proposed action and associated analysis were posted May 2, 2011 on the Forest Service World Wide Web at [www.fs.fed.us/da.gov/chugach](http://www.fs.fed.us/da.gov/chugach). In May 2011, a scoping letter was sent to 35 individuals, organizations, businesses, agencies, Alaska Native corporations and tribes, and others who have previously shown interest in Forest Service projects. Other agencies consulted include the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) Habitat Division, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Fifteen comments were received from the public through email, phone calls and at the public meeting. Issues and comments included the following:

- Concern regarding noise and visual effects to the adjacent private property west of the boating site.
- Concern regarding the protection of any heritage resources that might be in or around the area of the boating site.
- Concern regarding access to the existing boat ramp for launching boats during site construction.
- Concern regarding increased public use of Eyak River by sport fisherman.
- Support for elevating the outhouse vault toilet to eliminate the potential for vault flooding.
- Support for improving the capacity of the boating site and improving traffic flow.
- Support for correcting the road encroachment onto adjacent private property.
- Support for revegetating the Eyak River streambank at the boating site.
- Support for reconstruction of the boat ramp to make it wider for ease of boat launching and retrieving.

### **Response to Comments**

During the public comment period, fifteen comments were received through email, phone calls and/or the public meeting. From the fifteen comments received, four concerns were identified. These concerns and Forest Service responses are described below:

Issue: Concern regarding noise and visual effects to the adjacent private property west of the boating site.

Response: Alternative 3 was developed specifically to address this concern by increasing the vegetative buffer from 30 feet to 90 feet—which includes preserving several large mature Spruce trees. In addition, the EA includes a section that discusses noise and visual impacts to adjacent private property (EA pp. 14-15).

Issue: Concern regarding the protection of any heritage resources that might be in or around the area of the boating site.

Response To address the concerns about protecting heritage resources the Native Village of Eyak and the Eyak Corporation were consulted. A Forest Service archeologist will be present during ground disturbing activities that are determined necessary to have an archeologist present. If potentially significant cultural material is discovered, construction will be suspended and the Alaska State Historical Preservation Officer office will be consulted.

Issue: Concern regarding access to the existing boat ramp for launching boats during site construction.

Response: All of the action alternatives will allow for public access to the existing boat ramp and 6 truck/trailer parking spaces throughout all construction phases. In addition, no construction activities will occur from August 1 through September 30 and the public will have full site use including parking, boat launch and river access to accommodate Coho salmon sport fishing activities.

Issue: Concern regarding increased public use of Eyak River by sport fisherman.

Response: The Eyak River Boating Site is a developed public boating site and managed for developed recreation opportunities including sport fishing access to Eyak River. While the action alternative will improve the site, a substantial increase in use of the facility is not anticipated as a result of improvements. The addition of three parking spaces for vehicles with trailers, although an increase, is not expected to add significantly to the use. Information from Alaska Department Fish and Game statistics shows an increase in use from the 1990's, however over the past 10 years (2002 – 2011) angler numbers on Eyak River have fluctuated, but with no increasing or decreasing trends.

### **Pre-decisional Objection Process**

This project was subject to the pre-decisional review and objection process described in 36 CFR 218, Parts A and B. The final Environmental Assessment and draft Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact were made available, pursuant to 36 CFR 218.7(6) on November 22, 2013.

One objection was received on the project. An objection resolution meeting was held on January 23, 2014 where the Objection Reviewing Officer and I met with the objector to discuss his objections and whether any resolution was possible. Although the objection was not withdrawn by the objector, we did come to resolution on all but one of the objector's points.

Five of the seven points in the objection were resolved through clarification of the selected alternative and one point was resolved through the addition of an errata sheet (see attachment) to correct general errors in the site description in the EA.

The one issue that was not resolved relates to one of the six reasons for the decision, which is stated in this DN as “help meet recreation demand (especially during the coho salmon season) by constructing a larger parking area with 19 parking spaces for vehicles and 15 parking spaces for vehicles with trailers.” I am pleased we were able to work cooperatively to reach agreement on the fore going points and ameliorate all but one of the objections raised to this decision. While I realize that the objector’s concerns were not fully resolved, I believe that sport angler use data for Eyak River including the Alaska Department of Fish & game Sport Fishing Surveys (see attachment) supports the addition of a few more parking spaces. This decision is also supported by the other rationales and environmental analysis in this Decision Notice, the EA, and administrative record.

### **Finding of No Significant Impact**

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts. Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

1. **Beneficial and adverse impacts.** The EA does not identify any significant adverse impacts (EA pp. 8 through 18). Alternative 3 is designed to avoid or minimize potential short-term effects on wildlife, fisheries, recreation, and impacts to adjacent private property (EA pp. 6 through 7). Implementation of this alternative is expected to improve the recreation experience at the Eyak River Boating Site, corrects Forest Service encroachment, and provide for more orderly traffic flow.
2. **The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.** Implementation of Alternative 3 should improve public safety by reversing the traffic flow and providing for more orderly boat loading/unloading. It will also raise the public vault toilet above the 100 year flood event level.
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area.** The project area does not contain any unique characteristics or is within any wilderness area, wilderness study area, or inventoried roadless areas.
4. **The degree of controversy over environmental effects.** Public involvement with interested and affected individuals and agencies has not revealed any controversies over the project effects.
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** Our experience with recreation site reconstruction (e.g. Porcupine Campground and Trail River Campground) as well as the effects analysis in the EA does not indicate that the impacts from the alternatives are uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.
6. **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.** This decision will not establish a precedent for future actions.

There are no plans or expectations for additional construction or reconstruction at the Eyak Boating Site.

7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** There are no known significant cumulative effects between this project and other ongoing or planned project in or adjacent to this project. The effects of other foreseeable future actions as well as past action and ongoing actions were included in the analysis. (EA pp. 9 through 18).
8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect district, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National register of Historic Places, or may cause a loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.** A Forest Service archeologist has reviewed this project and on the ground archeological surveys have occurred in the Area of Potential Effect. A Determination of Eligibility will be conducted and mitigation measures identified in the EA followed.
9. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.** The action will have “no effect” on any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. (EA. Pg. 9).
10. **Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or other requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.** The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment and is consistent with the Chugach Forest Plan.

### **Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations**

#### **This decision is consistent with the Chugach Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan)**

The project is located within an area identified in the Forest Plan as 441-Developed Recreation Complex Management Area-Category 4. This management area prescription was developed to address the “Recreation Opportunities” Interest. The re-construction of the Eyak River Boating Site is an allowable use within the management area prescription. In addition, this decision is consistent with the management intent of 441-Developed Recreation Complexes Management Area-Category 4 because there are no adverse effects to threatened, endangered, or Forest Service sensitive species or any subsistence resources. A Forest Plan Consistency Checklist has been completed for this project and found that no forest plan amendment will be required

#### **ANILCA Section 810, Subsistence Evaluation and Finding**

Due to the existing boat launch remaining open to the public during construction (up to 60 days), no restriction to subsistence use for salmon at the Eyak River Boating Site would

occur. Other access points on foot also exist for subsistence harvest of salmon on the Eyak River as well as on nearby streams. For these reasons, this action would not result in a significant possibility of a significant restriction of subsistence use of wildlife, fish, or other foods.

A subsistence evaluation has been completed and there will be no adverse effects to species used for subsistence purposes.

#### **ANILCA Section 811, Subsistence Evaluation and Finding**

Due to the existing boat launch remaining open to the public during construction (up to 60 days), no restriction to subsistence use for salmon at the Eyak River Boating Site would occur. Other access points also exist for subsistence harvest of salmon while construction is occurring. Construction will not occur during the coho salmon season (Aug. 1 – Sept. 30). The site will be open for general public use and available for subsistence harvest of salmon throughout the season. For these reasons, this action would not result in a significant possibility of a significant restriction of subsistence users having reasonable access to subsistence resources on National Forest System Lands.

#### **Endangered Species Act of 1973**

There are no federally listed threatened or endangered species in the project area. In addition, there is no designated critical habitat or proposed critical habitat in the Eyak River Boating Site area.

#### **National Historic Preservation Act of 1966**

The Forest Service program for compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) includes locating, inventorying and evaluating the National Register of Historic Places eligibility of historic and archeological sites that may be directly or indirectly affected by scheduled activities. Regulations (36 CFR 800) implementing Section 106 of the NHPA require Federal agencies to consider the effects of their actions on sites that are determined eligible for inclusion in or are listed in the National Register of Historic Places (termed "historic properties"). A Forest Service archeologist has reviewed this project and on the ground archeological surveys have occurred in the Area of Potential Effect. A Determination of Eligibility will be conducted and mitigation measures identified in the EA will be followed.

#### **Floodplain Management (E.O. 11988), Protection of Wetlands (E.O. 11990)**

This activity will not impact the functional value of any floodplain as defined by Executive Order 11988.

#### **Recreational Fisheries (E.O. 12962)**

The in-stream construction activities will be completed during a window of time resulting in a minimal impact to the coho and sockeye salmon fishery which are the main sport fished species in the area.

**Environmental Justice (E.O. 12898)**

I have determined that, in accordance with Executive Order 12898, this project does not have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and low income populations.

**Invasive Species (E.O. 13112)**

Executive Order 13112 directs Federal agencies to identify actions which may affect the status of invasive species; prevent the introduction of invasive species; detect and respond rapidly to and control populations of such species; monitor invasive species populations; and to provide for restoration of native species and habitat conditions in ecosystems that have been invaded. An invasive plant risk assessment has been completed for this project. The risk of invasive plant species is expected to be minimal because all construction equipment must be cleaned (visibly free of soil, seeds, and other debris) before being transported to the project area.

**Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act**

Eyak River is documented as essential fish habitat (EFH). The instream construction window was developed in order to minimize impacts to fisheries resources. A fishery Biological Evaluation (BE) has been completed and concluded that the selected action alternative will not result in any adverse effects to anadromous fish or EFH.

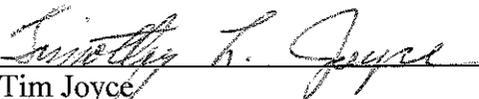
**Decision and Implementation**

In accordance with the regulations at 36 CFR 218.12(a) and (b), the reviewing officer has responded in writing to the objection and all instructions identified by the reviewing officer in the objection response have been addressed. Implementation of this project is expected to begin in 2014.

**Pursuant Contact**

The Responsible Official is Tim Joyce, Acting District Ranger on the Cordova Ranger District. For additional information concerning this decision, contact:

Dave Zastrow/Recreation Planner  
Post Office Box 280, Cordova, Alaska, 99574  
(907) 424-4754 / [dzastrow@fs.fed.us](mailto:dzastrow@fs.fed.us)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Tim Joyce  
Acting District Ranger  
Cordova Ranger District

02/07/2014  
Date

## **Exhibit 1—Design Features and Required Monitoring Eyak River Boating Site Project**

This decision includes design features to minimize the potential for short-term and long term impacts to wildlife, fisheries, recreation, and impacts to adjacent private property. The design features include the following:

### Wildlife

Disturbance to migratory birds could occur from vegetation clearing associated with the new access road and parking spaces. Design features include:

- No vegetation clearing will occur during the nesting breeding season for migratory birds (May 1 through July 1).

### Fisheries

Disturbance to fisheries resources could occur from runoff and sedimentation from the construction of the new boat ramp, new access road and parking facility. In addition, disturbance to salmon could occur during in-stream construction of the boat ramp and stream bank stabilization. The design features include:

- In-stream construction windows for boat ramp and stream bank stabilization work will be followed in order to reduce potential disturbance to salmon. In-stream construction will generally occur in the spring prior to salmon migration when water levels are the lowest or fall and winter after salmon migration has occurred. In-stream construction is expected to be completed between October 1 and May 30 for Eyak River.
- Dewatering may be required for the new ramp installation.
- The access road and parking area will slope toward vegetated areas in order to reduce runoff and sedimentation into Eyak River.
- Applicable Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be followed as described in the Region 10 Soil and Water Conservation Handbook (USDA Forest Service, Alaska Region, 2006) in order to ensure that water resources are protected within and downstream of the project area. Specific BMPs that apply include the following:
  - 12.4: Floodplain Identification, Evaluation, and Protection
  - 12.5: Wetland Identification, Evaluation, and Protection
  - 12.6: Riparian Area Designation and Protection
  - 14.5: Road and Trail Erosion Control Plan
  - 14.6: Timing Restrictions for Construction Activities
  - 14.9: Drainage Control to Minimize Erosion and Sedimentation
  - 14.24: Road Obliteration
  - 16.1: Recreation Facilities Planning and Location

### Recreation

Disturbance to recreation use of the Eyak River could occur during construction of the new boat ramp and parking area. Design features include:

- The existing boat ramp will be open to the public with potential minor delays in use throughout all phases of construction.
- Six truck/trailer parking spaces will be available to the public throughout all phases of construction.

- No construction activities will occur during the coho salmon fishing season (August 1 through September 30).

#### Heritage

Disturbance to heritage resources could occur from ground disturbing construction activities.

Design features include:

Only “fill” material will be removed from the existing access road. There will be no ground disturbance to below grade subsurface layers.

#### Invasive Plant Species

The Chugach Forest Plan identifies a goal to prevent introduction and spread of exotic plants.

Design features include:

- All construction equipment must be cleaned (visibly free from soils, plant material, and other debris) before being transported to the project area.

#### Adjacent Private Lands

Disturbance to adjacent private lands could occur from construction activities and recreational use of the Eyak River Boating Site. Design features include:

- A 90 foot green strip vegetative buffer consisting of overstory and understory woody and herbaceous vegetation will be left next to the adjacent private property to provide a visual and sound buffer.

## ERRATA SHEET

### Eyak River Boating Site Environmental Assessment

This errata sheet must be attached to the Eyak River Boating Site Environmental Assessment (EA) to comprise a full and complete record of the environmental analysis for this project.

<b>Page</b>	<b>Line</b>	<b>CORRECTION/ADDITION</b>	<b>WAS PRINTED AS</b>
2	8	"...along the north bank of the Eyak River..."	"...along the east bank of the Eyak River..."
4	13	"...18 parking spaces for vehicles with trailers on the west end..."	"...15 parking spaces for vehicles with trailers on the north end..."
5	4	"...130 feet upstream..."	"...70 feet upstream..."
5	5	"...30 feet from adjacent residential property..."	"...90 feet from adjacent residential property..."
12	37	"...October 2006..."	"...October 2007..."
13	21	"...private residence to the west and east..."	"...private residence to the north and south..."

Addendum Table 1. Number of Anglers and Angler Days on the Eyak River from 1996 through 2012. Taken from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Sport Fishing Surveys.

Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No. Anglers	993	985	967	1027	1317	1648	1127	2080	2490	1740	1684	2283	2016	1860	2643	1962	2105
No. Days Fished	3987	1986	3027	4659	4533	7279	5971	7793	7982	4832	5332	8191	6192	7810	10880	6989	6700

