United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Seward Ranger District | P.O. Box 390, 334 Fourth Avenue, Seward, AK 99664

File Code: 1950
Date: February 5, 2003

RE: Proposal for Stream and Riparian Restoration on Resurrection Creek

Dear Interested Citizen,

The Seward Ranger District is proposing a demonstration restoration project on an 0.8 mile segment of Resurrection Creek, 5 miles upstream from Hope, AK (see Figure 1). Project objectives are to restore and improve coho and chinook salmon habitat, and to restore the river floodplain and riparian health.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

This letter is part of our public scoping process, and is intended to solicit your ideas about the proposed project. **The Forest Service will host two public meetings** to display our findings on channel conditions on Resurrection Creek, to discuss issues associated with the proposed restoration efforts, and to solicit your comments on this proposal. The meetings schedule is as follows:

- **February 18, 2003, 6:00 to 8:00 PM, Hope, AK, the Hope School Gymnasium.** At this meeting we will present and discuss our findings, and solicit written comments.

- **February 19, 2003, 5:00 to 8:00 PM, Anchorage, AK, the Hampton Inn** – 4301 Credit Union Drive. This meeting will be an open house with displays and a 20-minute presentation given on each hour. We will solicit written comments.

Resurrection Creek channel restoration was originally highlighted in the Forest Service's 01/31/02 "***Resurrection Creek Landscape Assessment***". Last summer, the Forest Service conducted detailed assessment work on disturbed and undisturbed channel segments of Resurrection Creek. Results and proposals are reported in "***Resurrection Creek Stream Channel and Riparian Restoration Analysis***". Both documents may be found at the Chugach National Forest website at: **http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/chugach/** . Once at the website, navigate to "Current Projects/News Releases" and then to "Resurrection Creek Stream Restoration".

BACKGROUND

Historic placer mining operations have affected Resurrection Creek by straightening and simplifying the stream, and separating it from its floodplain. Resulting effects include:

- Loss of instream pools and off-channel rearing habitats
- Loss of large logs in the creek
- Increasing stream substrate size
- Increased stream velocities
- Altered riparian vegetation

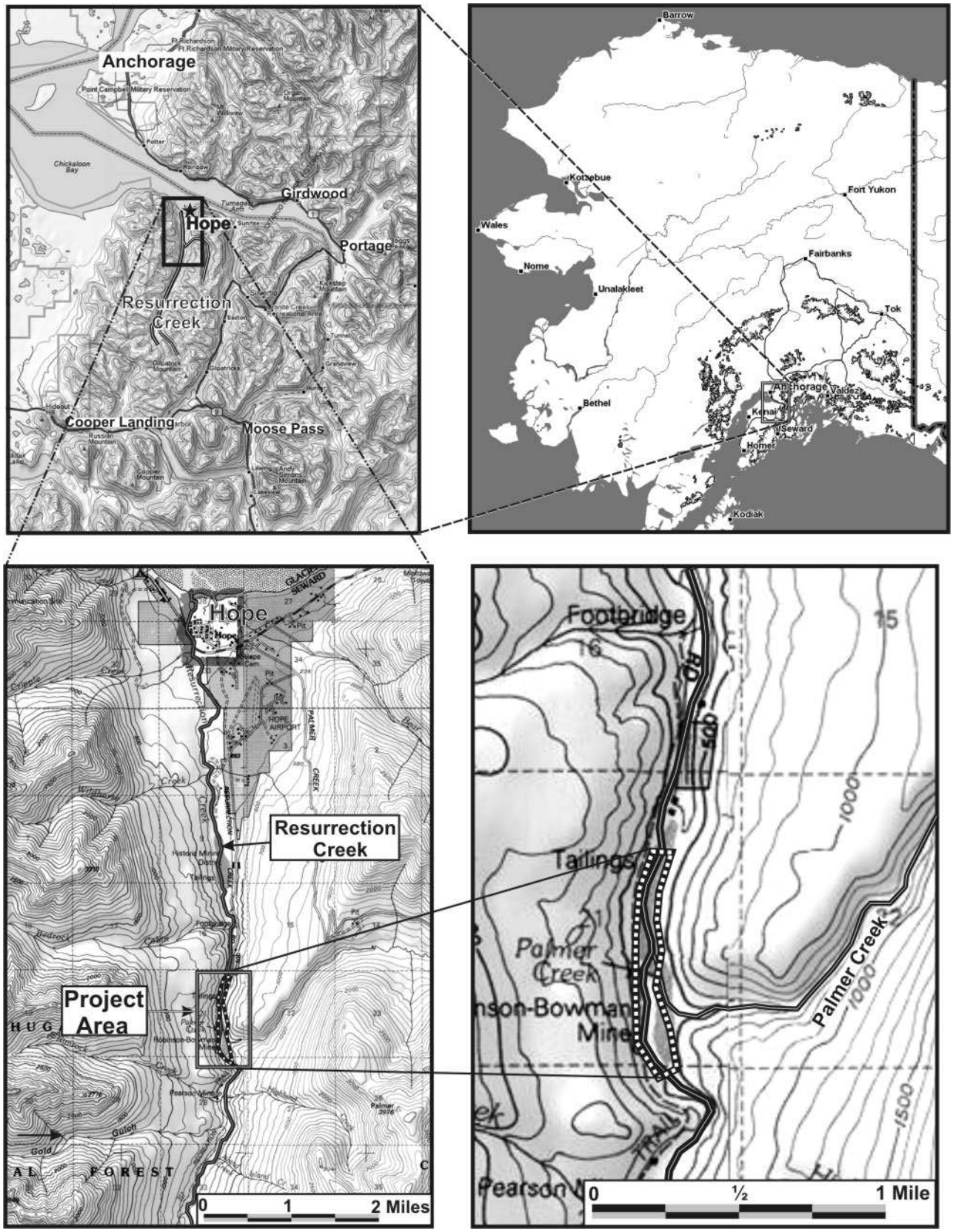

Figure 1. Locator maps for the proposed Resurrection Creek Stream and Riparian Restoration Project.

These impacts have degraded fish rearing and spawning habitat on Resurrection Creek, as well as adjacent wildlife riparian habitat for species such as bears and eagles. Natural recovery from mining impacts has been minimal on this segment of Resurrection Creek, despite most of the mining activity having occurred in the early 1900's.

The proposed project intends to greatly accelerate the recovery of riparian areas, water quality and fish habitat on Resurrection Creek. The project would involve using a variety of techniques to restore the Resurrection Creek stream corridor to a natural stream configuration. We will also consider measures to enhance off-channel salmon rearing on this stream segment.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Restoration work would take place along 0.8 miles of the main stem of Resurrection Creek including the creek's junction with tributary Palmer Creek. Restoration activities could include:

1) Mechanical manipulation of mine tailings to recover floodplain width and elevations.
2) Rebuilding river meander patterns, channel profile, instream pools, and spawning habitat.
3) Development of relief channels and off channel ponds within the floodplain.
4) Use of beetle killed spruce trees for in-stream and terrestrial woody material.
5) Soil augmentation in reclaimed riparian areas to provide soil/landform and drainage conditions which can support native plant communities.
6) Thinning of existing overstocked riparian sapling spruce and cottonwood stands.
7) Use of natural re-vegetation (without planting) where seed source and site conditions are favorable to the re-vegetation objectives.
8) Planting native plant species for re-vegetation/restoration where natural re-vegetation conditions are not favorable.

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

A Forest Service team with expertise in fish biology, hydrology, archeology, wildlife biology, and silviculture has identified the following preliminary issues:

1. **Effects to Fish and Wildlife:** Mechanized in-stream operations will affect aquatic organisms, including rearing coho and chinook salmon, resident Dolly Varden char, and bottom-dwelling sculpin and macroinvertebrates. Increased sedimentation can clog fish gills. Machinery working in-stream can directly kill individual fish. Mechanized operations can temporarily disturb or displace wildlife using the riparian corridor.

2. **Cultural Resources:** Tailing piles and other ground disturbance along Resurrection Creek are artifacts of historic mining operations. Mechanical operations would regrade these cultural features. The features will need to be properly recorded. Presence of additional mining artifacts will need to be determined. Artifacts will need to be avoided if possible, or interpreted if necessary for mitigation of adverse effects. Historic properties will need to be evaluated for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Collaborative stewardship relationships could be developed with interested parties for protection and interpretation of the heritage resources.

3. **Snags and down woody debris:** Riparian areas will be disturbed. Trees will be felled and skidded to streams for placement. Snags and down woody debris will need to be protected

from mechanized equipment. All decay classes of snags and down woody debris will need to be represented on site.

4. **Water Quality:** Mechanized equipment skidding logs and working in-stream can create short-term stream sedimentation and cause some risk of fuel spills to the stream. Water quality must be protected through construction.

5. **Riparian Moose Winter Range:** The riparian zones along Resurrection Creek have potential for moose winter range. An opportunity exists to restore riparian vegetation in a manner that promotes moose winter range.

6. **Noxious Weeds and Non-Native Species:** Soil disturbing activities such as skidding logs to the stream and building access trails (for excavators) increases the potential for introduction of noxious weed and non-native plant species.

7. **Simplifying Stand Structure:** Thinning the riparian zones would remove some of the suppressed and co-dominant trees growing in the understory. Such simplification of stand structure can degrade the habitat quality for some wildlife species in the short term, and disturb or displace some wildlife during thinning operations.

8. **Soil Augmentation:** Historic mining operations have stripped riparian areas of soil leaving very course substrates. Tailing piles have not been favorable to vegetation growth. Developing riparian vegetation will require hauling in soil and organics to improve vegetation growth within the floodplain and adjacent riparian areas.

We are interested in additional issues, concerns and opportunities that you believe may be important to this proposed project. Please send, e-mail, or phone your comments to:

Dave Blanchet, Project Coordinator
Chugach National Forest
3301 C Steet, Suite 300
Anchorage, AK 99503-3998

dblanchet@fs.fed.us
phone: (907) 743-9538
fax: (907) 743-9480

We are very interested in your comments. Please feel free to pass this letter on to others you think may have interest or concern with the proposed project. To be most useful to the Forest Service as we move to developing draft alternatives for this project, we would appreciate receiving your comments by ***Friday, March 21, 2003.***

Sincerely,

MICHAEL R. KANIA
District Ranger